Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

http://www.archive.org/details/modernpainting00mooriala

MODERN PAINTING

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

ESTHER WATERS.

CELIBATES.

VAIN FORTUNE.

A MUMMER'S WIFE.

A DRAMA IN MUSLIN.

A MODERN LOVER.

THE STRIKE AT ARLINGFORD (*Play*).

IMPRESSIONS AND OPINIONS.

Portrait by Manet.

George Moore

MODERN PAINTING

By GEORGE MOORE

NEW EDITION, ENLARGED

The Walter Scott Publishing Co., Ltd.
London and Felling-on-Tyne
New York and Melbourne

The Editor of "The Speaker" allowed me to publish from time to time chapters of a book on art. These chapters have been gathered from the mass of art journalism which had grown about them, and I reprint them in the sequence originally intended.

G. M

TO SIR WILLIAM EDEN, BART.

OF ALL MY BOOKS, THIS IS THE ONE YOU LIKE BEST; ITS SUBJECT HAS BEEN THE SUBJECT OF NEARLY ALL OUR CONVERSATIONS IN THE PAST, AND I SUPPOSE WILL BE THE SUBJECT OF MANY CONVERSATIONS IN THE FUTURE; SO, LOOKING BACK AND FORWARD, I DEDICATE THIS BOOK TO YOU.

G. M.

THE WALTER SCOTT PUBLISHING CO., LIMITED, FELLING-ON-TYNE.
5-13

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
WHISTLER	1
CHAVANNES, MILLET, AND MANET	25
THE FAILURE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY	45
ARTISTIC EDUCATION IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND	59
INGRES AND COROT	70
MONET, SISLEY, PISSARO, AND THE DECADENCE	84
OUR ACADEMICIANS	97
THE ORGANISATION OF ART	128
ART AND SCIENCE	134
ROYALTY IN ART	139
ART PATRONS	146
PICTURE DEALERS	153
MR. BURNE-JONES AND THE ACADEMY	158
THE ALDERMAN IN ART	160
RELIGIOSITY IN ART	175
THE CAMERA IN ART	182
THE NEW ENGLISH ART CLUB	190
A GREAT ARTIST	213
NATIONALITY IN ART	220
SEX IN ART	226
MR. STEER'S EXHIBITION	238
CLAUDE MONET	244
NOTES—	
MR. MARK FISHER	249
A PORTRAIT BY MR. SARGENT	251
AN ORCHID BY MR. JAMES	254
THE WHISTLER ALBUM	256
INGRES	258
SOME JAPANESE PRINTS	260
NEW ART CRITICISM	265
LONG AGO IN ITALY	282

WHISTLER.

I HAVE studied Mr. Whistler and thought about him this many a year. His character was for a long time incomprehensible to me; it contained elements apparently so antagonistic, so mutually destructive, that I had to confess my inability to bring him within any imaginable psychological laws, and classed him as one of the enigmas of life. But Nature is never illogical; she only seems so, because our sight is not sufficient to see into her intentions; and with study my psychological difficulties dwindled, and now the man stands before me exquisitely understood, a perfect piece of logic. All that seemed discordant and discrepant in his nature has now become harmonious and inevitable; the strangest and most erratic actions of his life now seem natural and consequential (I use the word in its grammatical sense) contradictions are reconciled, and looking at the man I see the pictures, and looking at the pictures I see the man.

But at the outset the difficulties were enormous.

It was like a newly-discovered Greek text, without punctuation or capital letters. Here was a man capable of painting portraits, perhaps not quite so full of grip as the best work done by Velasquez and Hals, only just falling short of these masters at the point where they were strongest, but plainly exceeding them in graciousness of intention, and subtle happiness of design, who would lay down his palette and run to a newspaper office to polish the tail of an epigram which he was launching against an unfortunate critic who had failed to distinguish between an etching and a pen-and-ink drawing! Here was a man who, though he had spent the afternoon painting like the greatest, would spend his evenings in frantic disputes over dinner-tables about the ultimate ownership of a mild joke, possibly good enough for *Punch*, something that any one might have said, and that most of us having said it would have forgotten! It will be conceded that such divagations are difficult to reconcile with the possession of artistic faculties of the highest order.

The "Ten o'clock" contained a good deal of brilliant writing, sparkling and audacious epigram, but amid all its glitter and "go" there are statements which, coming from Mr. Whistler, are as astonishing as a denial of the rotundity of the earth would be in a pamphlet bearing the name of Professor Huxley. Mr. Whistler is only serious in his art—a grave fault according to academicians, who are serious in everything except their "art." A very boyish utterance is the statement that such a thing as an artistic period has never been known.

One rubbed one's eyes; one said, Is this a joke, and, if so, where is the point of it? And then, as if not content with so much mystification, Mr. Whistler assured his ten o'clock audience that there was no such thing as nationality in art, and that you might as well speak of English mathematics as of English art. We do not stop to inquire if such answers contain one grain of truth; we know they do not —we stop to consider them because we know that the criticism of a creative artist never amounts to more than an ingenious defence of his own work —an ingenious exaltation of a weakness (a weakness which perhaps none suspects but himself) into a conspicuous merit.

Mr. Whistler has shared his life equally between America, France, and England. He is the one solitary example of cosmopolitanism in art, for there is nothing in his pictures to show that they come from the north, the south, the east, or the west. They are compounds of all that is great in Eastern and Western culture. Conscious of this, and fearing that it might be used as an argument against his art, Mr. Whistler threw over the entire history, not only of art, but of the world; and declared boldly that art was, like science, not national, but essentially cosmopolitan; and then, becoming aware of the anomaly of his genius in his generation, Mr. Whistler undertook to explain away the anomaly by ignoring the fifth century B.C. in Athens, the fifteenth century in Italy, and the seventeenth in Holland, and humbly submitting that artists never appeared in numbers like swallows, but singly like aerolites. Now our

task is not to disprove these statements, but to work out the relationship between the author of the "Butterfly Letters" and the painter of the portrait of "The Mother," "Lady Archibald Campbell," "Miss Alexander," and the other forty-one masterpieces that were on exhibition in the Goupil galleries.

There is, however, an intermediate step, which is to point out the intimate relationship between the letter-writer and the physical man. Although there is no internal evidence to show that the pictures were not painted by a Frenchman, an Italian, an Englishman, or a Westernised Japanese, it would be impossible to read any one of the butterfly-signed letters without feeling that the author was a man of nerves rather than a man of muscle, and, while reading, we should involuntarily picture him short and thin rather than tall and stalwart. But what has physical condition got to do with painting? A great deal. The greatest painters, I mean the very greatest —Michael Angelo, Velasquez, and Rubens—were gifted by Nature with as full a measure of health as of genius. Their physical constitutions resembled more those of bulls than of men. Michael Angelo lay on his back for three years painting the Sistine Chapel. Rubens painted a life-size figure in a morning of pleasant work, and went out to ride in the afternoon. But Nature has dowered Mr. Whistler with only genius. His artistic perceptions are more exquisite than Velasquez's. He knows as much, possibly even a little more, and yet the result is never quite equal. Why? A question of health. *C'est un tempérament de chatte.* He cannot pass

from masterpiece to masterpiece like Velasquez. The expenditure of nerve-force necessary to produce such a work as the portrait of Lady Archibald Campbell or Miss Alexander exhausts him, and he is obliged to wait till Nature recoups herself; and these necessary intervals he has employed in writing letters signed "Butterfly" to the papers, quarrelling with Oscar over a few mild jokes, explaining his artistic existence, at the expense of the entire artistic history of the world, collecting and classifying the stupidities of the daily and weekly press.

But the lesser side of a man of genius is instructive to study—indeed, it is necessary that we should study it if we would thoroughly understand his genius. "No man," it has been very falsely said, "is a hero to his *valet de chambre*." The very opposite is the truth. Man will bow the knee only to his own image and likeness. The deeper the humanity, the deeper the adoration; and from this law not even divinity is excepted. All we adore is human, and through knowledge of the flesh that grovels we may catch sight of the soul ascending towards the divine stars.

And so the contemplation of Mr. Whistler, the author of the "Butterfly Letters," the defender of his little jokes against the plagiarising tongue, should stimulate rather than interrupt our prostrations. I said that Nature had dowered Mr. Whistler with every gift except that of physical strength. If Mr. Whistler had the bull-like health of Michael Angelo, Rubens, and Hals, the Letters would never have been written. They were the safety-valve by which his strained nerves found relief from

the intolerable tension of the masterpiece. He has not the bodily strength to pass from masterpiece to masterpiece, as did the great ones of old time. In the completed picture slight traces of his agony remain. But painting is the most indiscreet of all the arts, and here and there an omission or a feeble indication reveal the painter to us in moments of exasperated impotence. To understand Mr. Whistler's art you must understand his body. I do not mean that Mr. Whistler has suffered from bad health—his health has always been excellent; all great artists have excellent health, but his constitution is more nervous than robust. He is even a strong man, but he is lacking in weight. Were he six inches taller, and his bulk proportionately increased, his art would be different. Instead of having painted a dozen portraits, every one — even the mother and Miss Alexander, which I personally take to be the two best—a little febrile in its extreme beauty, whilst some, masterpieces though they be, are clearly touched with weakness, and marked with hysteria — Mr. Whistler would have painted a hundred portraits, as strong, as vigorous, as decisive, and as easily accomplished as any by Velasquez or Hals. But if Nature had willed him so, I do not think we should have had the Nocturnes, which are clearly the outcome of a highly-strung, bloodless nature whetted on the whetstone of its own weakness to an exasperated sense of volatile colour and evanescent light. It is hardly possible to doubt that this is so when we look on these canvases, where, in all the stages of her repose, the night dozes and dreams upon our river—a creole

in Nocturne 34, upon whose trembling eyelids the lustral moon is shining; a quadroon in Nocturne 17, who turns herself out of the light anhungered and set upon some feast of dark slumber. And for the sake of these gem-like pictures, whose blue serenities are comparable to the white perfections of Athenian marbles, we should have done well to yield a little strength in portraiture, if the distribution of Mr. Whistler's genius had been left in our hands. So Nature has done her work well, and we have no cause to regret the few pounds of flesh that she withheld. A few pounds more of flesh and muscle, and we should have had another Velasquez; but Nature shrinks from repetition, and at the last moment she said, "The world has had Velasquez, another would be superfluous: let there be Jimmy Whistler."

In the Nocturnes Mr. Whistler stands alone, without a rival. In portraits he is at his best when they are near to his Nocturnes in intention, when the theme lends itself to an imaginative and decorative treatment; for instance, as in the mother or Miss Alexander. Mr. Whistler is at his worst when he is frankly realistic. I have seen pictures by Mr. Henry Moore that I like better than "The Blue Wave." Nor does Mr. Whistler seem to me to reach his highest level in any one of the three portraits—Lady Archibald Campbell, Miss Rose Corder, and "the lady in the fur jacket." I know that Mr. Walter Sickert considers the portrait of Lady Archibald Campbell to be Mr. Whistler's finest portrait. I submit, however, that the attitude is theatrical and not very explicit. It is a movement that has not

been frankly observed, nor is it a movement that has been frankly imagined. It has none of the artless elegance of Nature; it is full of studio combinations; and yet it is not a frankly decorative arrangement, as the portrait of the mother or Miss Alexander. When Hals painted his Burgomasters, he was careful to place them in definite and comprehensible surroundings. He never left us in doubt either as to the time or the place; and the same obligations of time and place, which Hals never shirked, seem to me to rest on the painter, if he elects to paint his sitter in any attitude except one of conventional repose.

Lady Archibald Campbell is represented in violent movement, looking backwards over her shoulder as she walks up the picture; yet there is nothing to show that she is not standing on the low table on which the model poses, and the few necessary indications are left out because they would interfere with the general harmony of his picture; because, if the table on which she is standing were indicated, the movement of outstretched arm would be incomprehensible. The hand, too, is somewhat uncertain, undetermined, and a gesture is meaningless that the hand does not determine and complete. I do not speak of the fingers of the right hand, which are non-existent; after a dozen attempts to paint the gloved hand, only an approximate result was obtained. Look at the ear, and say that the painter's nerves did not give way once or twice. And the likeness is vague and shadowy; she is only fairly representative of her class. We see fairly well that she is a lady *du grand monde*, who is,

however, not without knowledge of *les environs du monde*. But she is hardly English—she might be a French woman or an American. She is a sort of hybrid. Miss Rose Corder and "the lady in the fur jacket" are equally cosmopolitan; so, too, is Miss Alexander. Only once has Mr. Whistler expressed race, and that was in his portrait of his mother. Then these three ladies—Miss Corder, Lady Archibald Campbell, and "the lady in the fur jacket" —wear the same complexion: a pale yellow complexion, burnt and dried. With this conventional tint he obtains unison and a totality of effect; but he obtains this result at the expense of truth. Hals and Velasquez obtained the same result, without, however, resorting to such meretricious methods.

The portrait of the mother is, as every one knows, in the Luxemburg; but the engraving reminds us of the honour which France has done, but which we failed to do, to the great painter of the nineteenth century; and after much hesitation and arguing with myself I feel sure that on the whole this picture is the painter's greatest work in portraiture. We forget relations, friends, perhaps even our parents; but that picture we never forget; it is for ever with us, in sickness and in health; and in moments of extreme despair, when life seems hopeless, the strange magic of that picture springs into consciousness, and we wonder by what strange wizard craft was accomplished the marvellous pattern on the black curtain that drops past the engraving on the wall. We muse on the extraordinary beauty of that grey wall, on the black silhouette sitting so tranquilly, on the large

feet on a foot-stool, on the hands crossed, on the long black dress that fills the picture with such solemn harmony. Then mark the transition from grey to white, and how *le ton local* is carried through the entire picture, from the highest light to the deepest shadow. Note the tenderness of that white cap, the white lace cuffs, the certainty, the choice, and think of anything if you can, even in the best Japanese work, more beautiful, more delicate, subtle, illusive, certain in its handicraft; and if the lace cuffs are marvellous, the delicate hands of a beautiful old age lying in a small lace handkerchief are little short of miraculous. They are not drawn out in anatomical diagram, but appear and disappear, seen here on the black dress, lost there in the small white handkerchief. And when we study the faint, subtle outline of the mother's face, we seem to feel that there the painter has told the story of his soul more fully than elsewhere. That soul, strangely alive to all that is delicate and illusive in Nature, found perhaps its fullest expression in that grave old Puritan lady looking through the quiet refinement of her grey room, sitting in solemn profile in all the quiet habit of her long life.

Compared with later work, the execution is "tighter," if I may be permitted an expression which will be understood in studios; we are very far indeed from the admirable looseness of handling which is the charm of the portrait of Miss Rose Corder. There every object is born unconsciously beneath the passing of the brush. If not less certain, the touch in the portrait of the mother is less prompt; but the

painter's vision is more sincere and more intense. And to those who object to the artificiality of the arrangement, I reply that if the old lady is sitting in a room artificially arranged, Lady Archibald Campbell may be said to be walking through incomprehensible space. But what really decides me to place this portrait above the others is the fact that while painting his mother's portrait he was unquestionably absorbed in his model; and absorption in the model is perhaps the first quality in portrait-painting. Still, for my own personal pleasure, to satisfy the innermost cravings of my own soul, I would choose to live with the portrait of Miss Alexander. Truly, this picture seems to me the most beautiful in the world. I know very well that it has not the profound beauty of the Infantes by Velasquez in the Louvre; but for pure magic of inspiration, is it not more delightful? Just as Shelley's "Sensitive Plant" thrills the innermost sense like no other poem in the language, the portrait of Miss Alexander enchants with the harmony of colour, with the melody of composition.

Strangely original, a rare and unique thing, is this picture, yet we know whence it came, and may easily appreciate the influences that brought it into being. Exquisite and happy combination of the art of an entire nation and the genius of one man—the soul of Japan incarnate in the body of the immortal Spaniard. It was Japan that counselled the strange grace of the silhouette, and it was that country, too, that inspired in a dim, far-off way those subtly sweet and magical passages from grey to green, from green

again to changing evanescent grey. But a higher intelligence massed and impelled those chords of green and grey than ever manifested itself in Japanese fan or screen; the means are simpler, the effect is greater, and by the side of this picture the best Japanese work seems only facile superficial improvisation. In the picture itself there is really little of Japan. The painter merely understood all that Japan might teach. He went to the very root, appropriating only the innermost essence of its art. We Westerns had thought it sufficient to copy Nature, but the Japanese knew it was better to observe Nature. The whole art of Japan is selection, and Japan taught Mr. Whistler, or impressed upon Mr. Whistler, the imperative necessity of selection. No Western artist of the present or of past time—no, not Velasquez himself—ever selected from the model so tenderly as Mr. Whistler; Japan taught him to consider Nature as a storehouse whence the artist may pick and choose, combining the fragments of his choice into an exquisite whole. Sir John Millais' art is the opposite; there we find no selection; the model is copied—and sometimes only with sufficient technical skill.

But this picture is throughout a selection from the model; nowhere has anything been copied brutally, yet the reality of the girl is not sacrificed.

The picture represents a girl of ten or eleven. She is dressed according to the fashion of twenty years ago—a starched muslin frock, a small overskirt pale brown, white stockings, square-toed black shoes. She stands, her left foot advanced,

holding in her left hand a grey felt hat adorned with a long plume reaching nearly to the ground. The wall behind her is grey with a black wainscot. On the left, far back in the picture, on a low stool, some grey-green drapery strikes the highest note of colour in the picture. On the right, in the foreground, some tall daisies come into the picture, and two butterflies flutter over the girl's blonde head. This picture seems to exist principally in the seeing! I mean that the execution is so strangely simple that the thought, "If I could only see the model like that, I think I could do it myself," comes spontaneously into the mind. And this spontaneous thought is excellent criticism, for three-parts of Mr. Whistler's art lies in the seeing; no one ever saw Nature so artistically. Notice on the left the sharp line of the white frock cutting against the black wainscoting. Were that line taken away, how much would the picture lose! Look at the leg that is advanced, and tell me if you can detect the modelling. There is modelling, I know, but there are no vulgar roundnesses. Apparently, only a flat tint; but there is on the bone a light, hardly discernible; and this light is sufficient. And the leg that is turned away, the thick, chubby ankle of the child, how admirable in drawing; and that touch of darker colour, how it tells the exact form of the bone! To indicate is the final accomplishment of the painter's art, and I know no indication like that ankle bone. And now passing from the feet to the face, notice, I beg of you to notice—it is one of the points in the picture—that jaw bone. The face is seen in three-quarter, and to

focus the interest in the face the painter has slightly insisted on the line of the jaw bone, which, taken in conjunction with the line of the hair, brings into prominence the oval of the face. In Nature that charming oval only appeared at moments. The painter seized one of those moments, and called it into our consciousness as a musician with certain finger will choose to give prominence to a certain note in a chord.

There must have been a day in Mr. Whistler's life when the artists of Japan convinced him once and for ever of the primary importance of selection. In Velasquez, too, there is selection, and very often it is in the same direction as Mr. Whistler's, but the selection is never, I think, so much insisted upon; and sometimes in Velasquez there is, as in the portrait of the Admiral in the National Gallery, hardly any selection—I mean, of course, conscious selection. Velasquez sometimes brutally accepted Nature for what she was worth; this Mr. Whistler never does. But it was Velasquez that gave consistency and strength to what in Mr. Whistler might have run into an art of trivial but exquisite decoration. Velasquez, too, had a voice in the composition of the palette generally, so sober, so grave. The palette of Velasquez is the opposite of the palette of Rubens; the fantasy of Rubens' palette created the art of Watteau, Turner, Gainsborough; it obtained throughout the eighteenth century in England and in France. Chardin was the one exception. Alone amid the eighteenth century painters he chose the palette of Velasquez in preference to that

of Rubens, and in the nineteenth century Whistler too has chosen it. It was Velasquez who taught Mr. Whistler that flowing, limpid execution. In the painting of that blonde hair there is something more than a souvenir of the blonde hair of the Infante in the *salle carrée* in the Louvre. There is also something of Velasquez in the black notes of the shoes. Those blacks—are they not perfectly observed? How light and dry the colour is! How heavy and shiny it would have become in other hands! Notice, too, that in the frock nowhere is there a single touch of pure white, and yet it is all white—a rich, luminous white that makes every other white in the gallery seem either chalky or dirty. What an enchantment and a delight the handling is! How flowing, how supple, infinitely and beautifully sure, the music of perfect accomplishment! In the portrait of the mother the execution seems slower, hardly so spontaneous. For this, no doubt, the subject is accountable. But this little girl is the very finest flower, and the culminating point of Mr. Whistler's art. The eye travels over the canvas seeking a fault. In vain; nothing has been omitted that might have been included, nothing has been included that might have been omitted. There is much in Velasquez that is stronger, but nothing in this world ever seemed to me so perfect as this picture.

The portrait of Carlyle has been painted about an arabesque similar, I might almost say identical, to that of the portrait of the mother. But as is usually the case, the attempt to repeat a success has resulted a failure. Mr. Whistler has sought to vary the arab-

esque in the direction of greater naturalness. He has broken the severity of the line, which the lace handkerchief and the hands scarcely stayed in the first picture, by placing the philosopher's hat upon his knees; he has attenuated the symmetry of the picture-frames on the walls, and has omitted the black curtain which drops through the earlier picture. And all these alterations seemed to me like so many leaks through which the eternal something of the first design has run out. A pattern like that of the egg and dart cannot be disturbed, and Columbus himself cannot rediscover America. And, turning from the arabesque to the painting, we notice at once that the balance of colour, held with such exquisite grace by the curtain on one side and the dress on the other, is absent in the later work; and if we examine the colours separately we cannot fail to apprehend the fact that the blacks in the later are not nearly so beautiful as those in the earlier picture. The blacks of the philosopher's coat and rug are neither as rich, not as rare, nor as deep as the blacks of the mother's gown. Never have the vital differences and the beauty of this colour been brought out as in that gown and that curtain, never even in Hals, who excels all other painters in this use of black. Mr. Whistler's failure with the first colour, when we compare the two pictures, is exceeded by his failure with the second colour. We miss the beauty of those extraordinary and exquisite high notes—the cap and cuffs; and the place of the rich, palpitating greys, so tremulous in the background of the earlier picture, is taken by an insignificant grey that hardly seems

necessary or helpful to the coat and rug, and is only just raised out of the commonplace by the dim yellow of two picture-frames. It must be admitted, however, that the yellow is perfectly successful; it may be almost said to be what is most attractive in the picture. The greys in chin, beard, and hair must, however, be admitted to be beautiful, although they are not so full of charm as the greys in the portrait of Miss Alexander.

But if Mr. Whistler had only failed in these matters, he might have still produced a masterpiece. But there is a graver criticism to be urged against the picture. A portrait is an exact reflection of the painter's state of soul at the moment of sitting down to paint. We read in the picture what he really desired; for what he really desired is in the picture, and his hesitations tell us what he only desired feebly. Every passing distraction, every weariness, every loss of interest in the model, all is written upon the canvas. Above all, he tells us most plainly what he thought about his model—whether he was moved by love or contempt; whether his moods were critical or reverential. And what the canvas under consideration tells most plainly is that Mr. Whistler never forgot his own personality in that of the ancient philosopher. He came into the room as chirpy and anecdotal as usual, in no way discountenanced or put about by the presence of his venerable and illustrious sitter. He had heard that the Chelsea sage wrote histories which were no doubt very learned, but he felt no particular interest in the matter. Of reverence, respect, or intimate knowledge

of Carlyle there is no trace on the canvas; and looked at from this side the picture may be said to be the most American of all Mr. Whistler's works. "I am quite as big a man as you," to put it bluntly, was Mr. Whistler's attitude of mind while painting Carlyle. I do not contest the truth of the opinion. I merely submit that that is not the frame of mind in which great portraiture is done.

The drawing is large, ample, and vigorous, beautifully understood, but not very profound or intimate: the picture seems to have been accomplished easily, and in excellent health and spirits. The painting is in Mr. Whistler's later and most characteristic manner. For many years—for certainly twenty years—his manner has hardly varied at all. He uses his colour very thin, so thinly that it often hardly amounts to more than a glaze, and painting is laid over painting, like skin upon skin. Regarded merely as brushwork, the face of the sage could hardly be surpassed; the modelling is that beautiful flat modelling, of which none except Mr. Whistler possesses the secrets. What the painter saw he rendered with incomparable skill. The vision of the rugged pensiveness of the old philosophers is as beautiful and as shallow as a page of De Quincey. We are carried away in a flow of exquisite eloquence, but the painter has not told us one significant fact about his model, his nationality, his temperament, his rank, his manner of life. We learn in a general way that he was a thinker; but it would have been impossible to draw the head at all and conceal so salient a characteristic. Mr. Whistler's portrait reveals certain

general observations of life; but has he given one single touch intimately characteristic of his model?

But if the portrait of Carlyle, when looked at from a certain side, must be admitted to be not wholly satisfactory, what shall be said of the portrait of Lady Meux? The dress is a luminous and harmonious piece of colouring, the material has its weight and its texture and its character of fold; but of the face it is difficult to say more than that it keeps its place in the picture. Very often the faces in Mr. Whistler's portraits are the least interesting part of the picture; his sitter's face does not seem to interest him more than the cuffs, the carpet, the butterfly, which hovers about the screen. After this admission, it will seem to many that it is waste of time to consider further Mr. Whistler's claim to portraiture. This is not so. Mr. Whistler is a great portrait painter, though he cannot take measurements or follow an outline like Holbein.

Like most great painters, he has known how to introduce harmonious variation into his style by taking from others just as much of their sense of beauty as his own nature might successfully assimilate. I have spoken of his assimilation and combination of the art of Velasquez, and the entire art of Japan, but a still more striking instance of the power of assimilation, which, strange as it may seem, only the most original natures possess, is to hand in the early but extremely beautiful picture, *La femme en blanc.* In the Chelsea period of his life Mr. Whistler saw a great deal of that singular man, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. Intensely Italian, though he had never seen Italy;

and though writing no language but ours, still writing it with a strange hybrid grace, bringing into it the rich and voluptuous colour and fragrance of the south, expressing in picture and poem nothing but an uneasy haunting sense of Italy—opulence of women, not of the south, nor yet of the north, Italian celebration, mystic altar linen, and pomp of gold vestment and legendary pane. Of such hauntings Rossetti's life and art were made.

His hold on poetic form was surer than his hold on pictorial form, wherein his art is hardly more than poetic reminiscence of Italian missal and window pane. Yet even as a painter his attractiveness cannot be denied, nor yet the influence he has exercised on English art. Though he took nothing from his contemporaries, all took from him, poets and painters alike. Not even Mr. Whistler could refrain, and in *La femme en blanc* he took from Rossetti his manner of feeling and seeing. The type of woman is the same—beauty of dreaming eyes and abundant hair. And in this picture we find a poetic interest, a moral sense, if I may so phrase it, nowhere else to be detected, though you search Mr. Whistler's work from end to end. The woman stands idly dreaming by her mirror. She is what is her image in the glass, an appearance that has come, and that will go leaving no more trace than her reflection on the glass when she herself has moved away. She sees in her dream the world like passing shadows thrown on an illuminated cloth. She thinks of her soft, white, and opulent beauty which fills her white dress; her chin is lifted, and above her face shines the golden tumult of her hair.

The picture is one of the most perfect that Mr. Whistler has painted; it is as perfect as the mother or Miss Alexander, and though it has not the beautiful, flowing, supple execution of the "symphony in white," I prefer it for sake of its sheer perfection. It is more perfect than the symphony in white, though there is nothing in it quite so extraordinary as the loving gaiety of the young girl's face. The execution of that face is as flowing, as spontaneous, and as bright as the most beautiful day of May. The white drapery clings like haze about the edge of the woods, and the flesh tints are pearly and evanescent as dew, and soft as the colour of a flowering mead. But the kneeling figure is not so perfect, and that is why I reluctantly give my preference to the woman by the mirror. Turning again to this picture, I would fain call attention to the azalias, which, in irresponsible decorative fashion, come into the right-hand corner. The delicate flowers show bright and clear on the black-leaded fire-grate; and it is in the painting of such detail that Mr. Whistler exceeds all painters. For purity of colour and the beauty of pattern, these flowers are surely as beautiful as anything that man's hand has ever accomplished.

Mr. Whistler has never tried to be original. He has never attempted to reproduce on canvas the discordant and discrepant extravagancies of Nature as M. Besnard and Mr. John Sargent have done. His style has always been marked by such extreme reserve that the critical must have sometimes inclined to reproach him with want of daring, and ask themselves where was the innovator in this calculated

reduction of tones, in these formal harmonies, in this constant synthesis, sought with far more disregard for superfluous detail than Hals, for instance, had ever dared to show. The still more critical, while admitting the beauty and the grace of this art, must have often asked themselves what, after all, has this painter invented, what new subject-matter has he introduced into art?

It was with the night that Mr. Whistler set his seal and sign-manual upon art; above all others he is surely the interpreter of the night. Until he came the night of the painter was as ugly and insignificant as any pitch barrel; it was he who first transferred to canvas the blue transparent darkness which folds the world from sunset to sunrise. The purple hollow, and all the illusive distances of the gas-lit river, are Mr. Whistler's own. It was not the unhabited night of lonely plain and desolate tarn that he chose to interpret, but the difficult populous city night—the night of tall bridges and vast water rained through with lights red and grey, the shores lined with the lamps of the watching city. Mr. Whistler's night is the vast blue and golden caravanry, where the jaded and the hungry and the heavy-hearted lay down their burdens, and the contemplative freed from the deceptive reality of the day understand humbly and pathetically the casualness of our habitation, and the limitless reality of a plan, the intention of which we shall never know. Mr. Whistler's nights are the blue transparent darknesses which are half of the world's life. Sometimes he foregoes even the aid of earthly light, and his picture is but luminous blue shadow, delicately

graduated, as in the nocturne in M. Duret's collection—purple above and below, a shadow in the middle of the picture—a little less and there would be nothing.

There is the celebrated nocturne in the shape of a T—one pier of the bridge and part of the arch, the mystery of the barge, and the figure guiding the barge in the current, the strange luminosity of the fleeting river! lines of lights, vague purple and illusive distance, and all is so obviously beautiful that one pauses to consider how there could have been stupidity enough to deny it. Of less dramatic significance, but of equal æsthetic value, is the nocturne known as "the Cremorne lights." Here the night is strangely pale; one of those summer nights when a slight veil of darkness is drawn for an hour or more across the heavens. Another of quite extraordinary beauty, even in a series of extraordinarily beautiful things, is "Night on the Sea." The waves curl white in the darkness, and figures are seen as in dreams; lights burn low, ships rock in the offing, and beyond them, lost in the night, a vague sense of illimitable sea.

Out of the night Mr. Whistler has gathered beauty as august as Phidias took from Greek youths. Nocturne 11 is the picture which Professor Ruskin declared to be equivalent to flinging a pot of paint in the face of the public. But that black night, filling the garden even to the sky's obliteration, is not black paint but darkness. The whirl of the St. Catherine wheel in the midst of this darkness amounts to a miracle, and the exquisite drawing of the shower of falling fire

would arouse envy in Rembrandt, and prompt imitation. The line of the watching crowd is only just indicated, and yet the garden is crowded. There is another nocturne in which rockets are rising and falling, and the drawing of these two showers of fire is so perfect, that when you turn quickly towards the picture, the sparks really do ascend and descend.

More than any other painter, Mr. Whistler's influence has made itself felt on English art. More than any other man, Mr. Whistler has helped to purge art of the vice of subject and belief that the mission of the artist is to copy nature. Mr. Whistler's method is more learned, more co-ordinate than that of any other painter of our time; all is preconceived from the first touch to the last, nor has there ever been much change in the method, the painting has grown looser, but the method was always the same; to have seen him paint at once is to have seen him paint at every moment of his life. Never did a man seem more admirably destined to found a school which should worthily carry on the tradition inherited from the old masters and represented only by him. All the younger generation has accepted him as master, and that my generation has not profited more than it has, leads me to think, however elegant, refined, emotional, educated it may be, and anxious to achieve, that it is lacking in creative force, that it is, in a word, slightly too slight.

CHAVANNES, MILLET, AND MANET.

Of the great painters born before 1840 only two now are living, Puvis de Chavannes and Degas. It is true to say of Chavannes that he is the only man alive to whom a beautiful building might be given for decoration without fear that its beauty would be disgraced. He is the one man alive who can cover twenty feet of wall or vaulted roof with decoration that will neither deform the grandeur nor jar the greyness of the masonry. Mural decoration in his eyes is not merely a picture let into a wall, nor is it necessarily mural decoration even if it be painted on the wall itself: it is mural decoration if it form part of the wall, if it be, if I may so express myself, a variant of the stonework. No other painter ever kept this end so strictly before his eyes. For this end Chavannes reduced his palette almost to a monochrome, for this end he models in two flat tints, for this end he draws in huge undisciplined masses.

Let us examine his palette: many various greys, some warmed with vermilion, some with umber, and many more that are mere mixtures of black and white, large quantities of white, for Chavannes paints in a high key, wishing to disturb the colour of the surrounding stone as little as may be. Grey

and blue are the natural colours of building stone; when the subject will not admit of subterfuge, he will introduce a shade of pale green, as in his great decoration entitled "Summer"; but grey is always the foundation of his palette, and it fills the middle of the picture. The blues are placed at the top and bottom, and he works between them in successive greys. The sky in the left-hand top corner is an ultramarine slightly broken with white; the blue gown at the bottom of the picture, not quite in the middle of the picture, a little on the right, is also ultramarine, and here the colour is used nearly in its first intensity. And the colossal woman who wears the blue gown leans against some grey forest tree trunk, and a great white primeval animal is what her forms and attitude suggest. There are some women about her, and they lie and sit in disconnected groups like fragments fallen from a pediment. Nor is any attempt made to relate, by the aid of vague look or gesture, this group in the foreground to the human hordes engaged in building enclosures in the middle distance. In Chavannes the composition is always as disparate as an early tapestry, and the drawing of the figures is almost as rude. If I may be permitted a French phrase, I will say *un peu sommaire* quite unlike the beautiful simplifications of Raphael or Ingres, or indeed any of the great masters. They could simplify without becoming rudimentary; Chavannes cannot.

And now a passing word about the handicraft, the manner of using the brush. Chavannes shares the modern belief—and only in this is he modern—that

for the service of thought one instrument is as apt as another, and that, so long as that man's back—he who is pulling at the rope fastened at the tree's top branches—is filled in with two grey tints, it matters not at all how the task is accomplished. Truly the brush has plastered that back as a trowel might, and the result reminds one of stone and mortar, as Millet's execution reminds one of mud-pie making. The handicraft is as barbarous in Chavannes as it is in Millet, and we think of them more as great poets working in a not wholly sympathetic and, in their hands, somewhat rebellious material. Chavannes is as an epic poet whose theme is the rude grandeur of the primeval world, and who sang his rough narrative to a few chords struck on a sparely-stringed harp that his own hands have fashioned. And is not Millet a sort of French Wordsworth who in a barbarous Breton dialect has told us in infinitely touching strains of the noble submission of the peasant's lot, his unending labours and the melancholy solitude of the country.

As poet-painters, none admires these great artists more than I, but the moment we consider them as painters we have to compare the handicraft of the decoration entitled "Summer" with that of Francis the First meeting Marie de Medicis; we have to compare the handicraft of the Sower and the Angelus with that of "Le Bon Bock" and "L'enfant à l'épée"; and the moment we institute such comparison does not the inferiority of Chavannes' and Millet's handicraft become visible even to the least initiated in the art of painting, and is not the conclusion forced

upon us that however Manet may be judged inferior to Millet as a poet, as a painter he is easily his superior? And as Millet's and Chavannes' brush-work is deficient in beauty so is their drawing. Preferring decorative unity to completeness of drawing, Chavannes does not attempt more than some rudimentary indications. Millet seems even to have desired to omit technical beauty, so that he might concentrate all thought on the poetic synthesis he was gathering from the earth. Degas, on the contrary, draws for the sake of the drawing—The Ballet Girl, The Washerwoman, The Fat Housewife bathing herself, is only a pretext for drawing; and Degas chose these extraordinary themes because the drawing of the ballet girl and the fat housewife is less known than that of the nymph and the Spartan youth. Painters will understand what I mean by the drawing being "less known,"—that knowledge of form which sustains the artist like a crutch in his examination of the model, and which as it were dictates to the eye what it must see. So the ballet girl was Degas' escapement from the thraldom of common knowledge. The ballet girl was virgin soil. In her meagre thwarted forms application could freely be made of the supple incisive drawing which bends to and flows with the character—that drawing of which Ingres was the supreme patron, and of which Degas is the sole inheritor.

Until a few years ago Chavannes never sold a picture. Millet lived his life in penury and obscurity, but thirty years of persistent ridicule having failed to

destroy Degas' genius, some recognition has been extended to it. The fate of all great artists in the nineteenth century is a score years of neglect and obloquy. They may hardly hope for recognition before they are fifty; some few cases point the other way, but very few—the rule is thirty years of neglect and obloquy. Then a flag of truce will be held out to the recalcitrant artist who cannot be prevented from painting beautiful pictures. "Come, let us be friends; let's kiss and make it up; send a picture to the academy; we'll hang it on the line, and make you an academician the first vacancy that occurs." To-day the academy would like to get Mr. Whistler, but Mr. Whistler replies to the academy as Degas replied to the government official who wanted a picture for the Luxembourg. *Non, je ne veux pas être conduit au poste par les sargents de ville d'arts.*

To understand Manet's genius, the nineteenth century would have required ten years more than usual, for in Manet there is nothing but good painting, and there is nothing that the nineteenth century dislikes as much as good painting. In Whistler there is an exquisite and inveigling sense of beauty; in Degas there is an extraordinary acute criticism of life, and so the least brutal section of the public ended by pardoning Whistler his brush-work, and Degas his beautiful drawing. But in Manet there is nothing but good painting, and it is therefore possible that he might have lived till he was eighty without obtaining recognition. Death alone could accomplish the miracle of opening the public's eyes to his merits. During his life the excuse given for the constant

persecution waged against him by the "authorities" was his excessive originality. But this was mere subterfuge; what was really hated—what made him so unpopular—was the extraordinary beauty of his handling. Whatever he painted became beautiful—his hand was dowered with the gift of quality, and there his art began and ended. His painting of still life never has been exceeded, and never will be. I remember a pear that used to hang in his studio. Hals would have taken his hat off to it.

Twenty years ago Manet's name was a folly and a byword in the Parisian studios. The students of the Beaux Arts used to stand before his *salon* pictures and sincerely wonder how any one could paint like that; the students were quite sure that it was done for a joke, to attract attention; and then, not quite sincerely, one would say, "But I'll undertake to paint you three pictures a week like that." I say that the remark was never quite sincere, for I never heard it made without some one answering, "I don't think you could; just come and look at it again—there's more in it than you think." No doubt we thought Manet very absurd, but there was always something forced and artificial in our laughter and the ridicule we heaped upon him.

But about that time my opinions were changing; and it was a great event in my life when Manet spoke to me in the café of the Nouvelle Athène. I knew it was Manet; he had been pointed out to me, and I had admired the finely-cut face from whose prominent chin a closely-cut blonde beard came forward; and the aquiline nose, the clear grey eyes,

the decisive voice, the remarkable comeliness of the well-knit figure, scrupulously but simply dressed, represented a personality curiously sympathetic. On several occasions shyness had compelled me to abandon my determination to speak to him. But once he had spoken I entered eagerly into conversation, and next day I went to his studio. It was quite a simple place. Manet expended his æstheticism on his canvases, and not upon tapestries and inlaid cabinets. There was very little in his studio except his pictures: a sofa, a rocking-chair, a table for his paints, and a marble table on iron supports, such as one sees in cafés. Being a fresh-complexioned, fair-haired young man, the type most suitable to Manet's palette, he at once asked me to sit. His first intention was to paint me in a café; he had met me in a café, and he thought he could realise his impression of me in the first surrounding he had seen me in.

The portrait did not come right; ultimately it was destroyed; but it gave me every opportunity of studying Manet's method of painting. Strictly speaking, he had no method; painting with him was a pure instinct. Painting was one of the ways his nature manifested itself. That frank, fearless, prompt nature manifested itself in everything that concerned him—in his large plain studio, full of light as a conservatory; in his simple, scrupulous clothes, and yet with a touch of the dandy about them; in decisive speech, quick, hearty, and informed with a manly and sincere understanding of life. Never was an artist's inner nature in more direct conformity with his work. There were no circumlo-

cutions in Manet's nature, there were none in his art.

The colour of my hair never gave me a thought until Manet began to paint it. Then the blonde gold that came up under his brush filled me with admiration, and I was astonished when, a few days after, I saw him scrape off the rough paint and prepare to start afresh.

"Are you going to get a new canvas?"

"No; this will do very well."

"But you can't paint yellow ochre on yellow ochre without getting it dirty?"

"Yes, I think I can. You go and sit down."

Half-an-hour after he had entirely repainted the hair, and without losing anything of its brightness. He painted it again and again; every time it came out brighter and fresher, and the painting never seemed to lose anything in quality. That this portrait cost him infinite labour and was eventually destroyed matters nothing; my point is merely that he could paint yellow over yellow without getting the colour muddy. One day, seeing that I was in difficulties with a black, he took a brush from my hand, and it seemed to have hardly touched the canvas when the ugly heaviness of my tiresome black began to disappear. There came into it grey and shimmering lights, the shadows filled up with air, and silk seemed to float and rustle. There was no method—there was no trick; he merely painted. My palette was the same to him as his own; he did not prepare his palette; his colour did not exist on his palette before he put it on the canvas; but working

under the immediate dictation of his eye, he snatched the tints instinctively, without premeditation. Ah! that marvellous hand, those thick fingers holding the brush so firmly—somewhat heavily; how malleable, how obedient, that most rebellious material, oil-colour, was to his touch. He did with it what he liked. I believe he could rub a picture over with Prussian blue without experiencing any inconvenience; half-an-hour after the colour would be fine and beautiful.

And never did this mysterious power which produces what artists know as "quality" exist in greater abundance in any fingers than it did in the slow, thick fingers of Edouard Manet: never since the world began; not in Velasquez, not in Hals, not in Rubens, not in Titian. As an artist Manet could not compare with the least among these illustrious painters; but as a manipulator of oil-colour he never was and never will be excelled. Manet was born a painter as absolutely as any man that ever lived, so absolutely that a very high and lucid intelligence never for a moment came between him and the desire to put anything into his picture except good painting. I remember his saying to me, "I also tried to write, but I did not succeed; I never could do anything but paint." And what a splendid thing for an artist to be able to say. The real meaning of his words did not reach me till years after; perhaps I even thought at the time that he was disappointed that he could not write. I know now what was passing in his mind: *Je ne me suis pas trompé de métier.* How many of us can say as much? Go round a picture gallery, and of how many pictures,

ancient or modern, can you stand before and say, *Voilà un homme qui ne s'est pas trompé de métier?*

Perhaps above all men of our generation Manet made the least mistake in his choice of a trade. Let those who doubt go and look at the beautiful picture of Boulogne Pier, now on view in Mr. Van Wesselingh's gallery, 26 Old Bond Street. The wooden pier goes right across the canvas; all the wood piers are drawn, there is no attempt to hide or attenuate their regularity. Why should Manet attenuate when he could fill the interspaces with the soft lapping of such exquisite blue sea-water. Above the piers there is the ugly yellow-painted rail. But why alter the colour when he could keep it in such exquisite value? On the canvas it is beautiful. In the middle of the pier there is a mast and a sail which does duty for an awning; perhaps it is only a marine decoration. A few loungers are on the pier—men and women in grey clothes. Why introduce reds and blues when he was sure of being able to set the little figures in their places, to draw them so firmly, and relieve the grey monotony with such beauty of execution? It would be vain to invent when so exquisite an execution is always at hand to relieve and to transform. Mr. Whistler would have chosen to look at the pier from a more fanciful point of view. Degas would have taken an odd corner; he would have cut the composition strangely, and commented on the humanity of the pier. But Manet just painted it without circumlocutions of any kind. The subject was void of pictorial relief. There was not even a blue space in the sky, nor yet a dark cloud. He

took it as it was—a white sky, full of an inner radiance, two sailing-boats floating in mist of heat, one in shadow, the other in light. Vandervelde would seem trivial and precious beside painting so firm, so manly, so free from trick, so beautifully logical, and so unerring.

Manet did not often paint sea-pieces. He is best known and is most admired as a portrait-painter, but from time to time he ventured to trust his painting to every kind of subject—I know even a cattle-piece by Manet—and his Christ watched over by angels in the tomb is one of his finest works. His Christ is merely a rather fat model sitting with his back against a wall, and two women with wings on either side of him. There is no attempt to suggest a Divine death or to express the Kingdom of Heaven on the angels' faces. But the legs of the man are as fine a piece of painting as has ever been accomplished.

In an exhibition of portraits now open in Paris, entitled *Cent Chefs-d'Œuvre*, Manet has been paid the highest honour; he himself would not demand a greater honour—his "Bon Bock" has been hung next to a celebrated portrait by Hals. . . .

Without seeing it, I know that the Hals is nobler, grander; I know, supposing the Hals to be a good one, that its flight is that of an eagle as compared with the flight of a hawk. The comparison is exaggerated; but, then, so are all comparisons. I also know that Hals does not tell us more about his old woman than Manet tells us about the man who sits so gravely by his glass of foaming ale, so

clearly absorbed by it, so oblivious to all other joys but those that it brings him. Hals never placed any one more clearly in his favourite hour of the day, the well-desired hour, looked forward to perhaps since the beginning of the afternoon. In this marvellous portrait we read the age, the rank, the habits, the limitations, physical and mental, of the broad-faced man who sits so stolidly, his fat hand clasping his glass of foaming ale. Nothing has been omitted. We look at the picture, and the man and his environment become part of our perception of life. That stout, middle-aged man of fifty, who works all day in some small business, and goes every evening to his café to drink beer, will abide with us for ever. His appearance, and his mode of life, which his appearance so admirably expresses, can never become completely dissociated from our understanding of life. For Manet's "Bon Bock" is one of the eternal types, a permanent national conception, as inherent in French life as Polichinelle, Pierrot, Monsieur Prud'homme, or the Baron Hulot. I have not seen the portrait for fifteen or eighteen years, and yet I see it as well as if it were hung on the wall opposite the table on which I am writing this page. I can see that round, flat face, a little swollen with beer, the small eyes, the spare beard and moustaches. His feet are not in the picture, but I know how much he pays for his boots, and how they fit him. Nor did Hals ever paint better; I mean that nowhere in Hals will you find finer handling, or a more direct luminous or simple expression of what the eye saw. It has all the qualities I have enumerated, and yet it falls short of

Hals. It has not the breadth and scope of the great Dutchman. There is a sense of effort, *on sent le souffle*, and in Hals one never does. It is more bound together, it does not flow with the mighty and luminous ease of the *chefs d'œuvre* at Haarlem.

But is this Manet's final achievement, the last word he has to say? I think not. It was painted early in the sixties, probably about the same period as the Luxembourg picture, when the effects of his Spanish travel were wearing off, and Paris was beginning to command his art. Manet used to say, "When Degas was painting Semiramis I was painting modern Paris." It would have been more true to have said modern Spain. For it was in Spain that Manet found his inspiration. He had not been to Holland when he painted his Spanish pictures. Velasquez clearly inspired them; but there never was in his work any of the noble delicacies of the Spaniard; it was always nearer to the plainer and more—forgive the phrase—yokel-like eloquence of Hals. The art of Hals he seemed to have divined; it seems to have come instinctively to him.

Manet went to Spain after a few months spent in Couture's studio. Like all the great artists of our time, he was self-educated—Whistler, Degas, Courbet, Corot, and Manet wasted little time in other men's studios. Soon after his return from Spain, by some piece of good luck, Manet was awarded *une mention honorable* at the Salon for his portrait of a toreador. Why this honour was conferred upon him it is difficult to guess. It must have been the result of some special influence exerted at a special

moment, for ever after—down to the year of his death—his pictures were considered as an excrescence on the annual exhibitions at the *Salon*. Every year—down to the year of his death—the jury, M. Bouguereau et Cie., lamented that they were powerless to reject these ridiculous pictures. Manet had been placed *hors concours*, and they could do nothing. They could do nothing except stand before his pictures and laugh. Oh, I remember it all very well. We were taught at the Beaux-Arts to consider Manet an absurd person or else an *épateur*, who, not being able to paint like M. Gérôme, determined to astonish. I remember perfectly well the derision with which those *chefs d'œuvre*, "Yachting at Argenteuil" and "Le Linge," were received. They were in his last style—that bright, clear painting in which violet shadows were beginning to take the place of the conventional brown shadows, and the brush-work, too, was looser and more broken up; in a word, these pictures were the germ from which has sprung a dozen different schools, all the impressionism and other isms of modern French art. Before these works, in which the real Manet appeared for the first time, no one had a good word to say. To kill them more effectually, certain merits were even conceded to the "Bon Bock" and the Luxembourg picture.

The "Bon Bock," as we have seen, at once challenges comparison with Hals. But in "Le Linge" no challenge is sent forth to any one; it is Manet, all Manet, and nothing but Manet. In this picture he expresses his love of the gaiety and pleasure of Parisian life. And this bright-faced,

simple-minded woman, who stands in a garden crowded with the tallest sunflowers, the great flower-crowns drooping above her, her blue cotton dress rolled up to the elbows, her hands plunged in a small wash-tub in which she is washing some small linen, habit-shirts, pocket-handkerchiefs, collars, expresses the joy of homely life in the French suburb. Her home is one of good wine, excellent omelettes, soft beds; and the sheets, if they are a little coarse, are spotless, and retain an odour of lavender-sweetened cupboards. Her little child, about four years old, is with his mother in the garden; he has strayed into the foreground of the picture, just in front of the wash-tub, and he holds a great sunflower in his tiny hand. Beside this picture of such bright and happy aspect, the most perfect example of that *genre* known as *la peinture claire*, invented by Manet, and so infamously and absurdly practised by subsequent imitators—beside this picture so limpid, so fresh, so unaffected in its handling, a Courbet would seem heavy and dull, a sort of mock old master; a Corot would seem ephemeral and cursive; a Whistler would seem thin; beside this picture of such elegant and noble vision a Stevens would certainly seem odiously common. Why does not Liverpool or Manchester buy one of these masterpieces? If the blueness of the blouse frightens the administrators of these galleries, I will ask them—and perhaps this would be the more practical project — to consider the purchase of Manet's first and last historical picture, the death

of the unfortunate Maximilian in Mexico. Under a high wall, over which some Mexicans are looking, Maximilian and two friends stand in front of the rifles. The men have just fired, and death clouds the unfortunate face. On the right a man stands cocking his rifle. Look at the movement of the hand, how well it draws back the hammer. The face is nearly in profile—how intent it is on the mechanism. And is not the drawing of the legs, the boots, the gaiters, the arms lifting the heavy rifle with slow deliberation, more massive, firm, and concise than any modern drawing? How ample and how exempt from all trick, and how well it says just what the painter wanted to say! This picture, too, used to hang in his studio. But the greater attractiveness of "Le Linge" prevented me from discerning its more solemn beauty. But last May I came across it unexpectedly, and after looking at it for some time the thought that came was—no one painted better, no one will ever paint better.

The Luxembourg picture, although one of the most showy and the completest amongst Manet's masterpieces, is not, in my opinion, either the most charming or the most interesting; and yet it would be difficult to say that this of the many life-sized nudes that France has produced during the century is not the one we could least easily spare. Ingres' Source compares not with things of this century, but with the marbles of the fourth century B.C. Cabanel's Venus is a beautiful design, but its destruction would create no appreciable gap in the history of nineteenth century art. The destruction of "Olympe" would

The picture is remarkable not only for the excellence of the execution, but for a symbolic intention nowhere else to be found in Manet's works. The angels on either side of his dead Christ necessitated merely the addition of two pairs of wings—a convention which troubled him no more than the convention of taking off his hat on entering a church. But in "Olympe" we find Manet departing from the individual to the universal. The red-headed woman who used to dine at the *Ratmort* does not lie on a modern bed but on the couch of all time; and she raises herself from amongst her cushions, setting forth her somewhat meagre nudity as arrogantly and with the same calm certitude of her sovereignty as the eternal Venus for whose prey is the flesh of all men born. The introduction of a bouquet bound up in large white paper does not prejudice the symbolic intention, and the picture would do well for an illustration to some poem to be found in "*Les fleurs du Mal.*" It may be worth while to note here that Baudelaire printed in his volume a quatrain inspired by one of Manet's Spanish pictures.

But after this slight adventure into symbolism, Manet's eyes were closed to all but the visible world. The visible world of Paris he saw henceforth—truly, frankly, and fearlessly, and more beautifully than any of his contemporaries. Never before was a great man's mind so strictly limited to the range of what his eyes saw. Nature wished it so, and, having discovered nature's wish, Manet joined his desire with Nature's. I remember his saying as he showed me some illustrations he had done for Mallarme's translation of Edgar Poe's

poem, "You'll admit that it doesn't give you much idea 'of a kingdom by the sea.'" The drawing represented the usual sea-side watering place—the beach with a nursemaid at full length; children building sand castles, and some small sails in the offing.

So Manet was content to live by the sight, and by the sight alone; he was a painter, and had neither time nor taste for such ideals as Poe's magical Annabel Lee. Marvellous indeed must have been the eyes that could have persuaded such relinquishment. How marvellous they were we understand easily when we look at "Olympe." Eyes that saw truly, that saw beautifully and yet somewhat grossly. There is much vigour in the seeing, there is the exquisite handling of Hals, and there is the placing, the setting forth of figures on the canvas, which was as instinctively his as it was Titian's. Hals and Velasquez possessed all those qualities, and something more. They would not have been satisfied with that angular, presumptuous, and obvious drawing, harsh in its exterior limits and hollow within—the head a sort of convulsive abridgment, the hand void, and the fingers too, if we seek their articulations. An omission must not be mistaken for a simplification, and for all his omissions Manet strives to make amend by the tone. It would be difficult to imagine a more beautiful syntheses than that pale yellow, a beautiful golden sensation, and the black woman, the attendant of this light of love, who comes to the couch with a large bouquet fresh from the boulevard, is certainly a piece of painting that Rubens and Titian would stop to admire.

But when all has been said, I prefer Manet in

the quieter and I think the more original mood in the portrait of his sister-in-law, Madame Morisot. The portrait is in M. Duret's collection; it hangs in a not too well lighted passage, and if I did not spend six or ten minutes in admiration before this picture, I should feel that some familiar pleasure had drifted out of my yearly visit to Paris. Never did a white dress play so important or indeed so charming a part in a picture. The dress is the picture—this common white dress, with black spots, *une robe a poix*, *une petite confection de soixante cinq francs*, as the French would say; and very far it is from all remembrance of the diaphanous, fairy-like skirts of our eighteenth century English school, but I swear to you no less charming. It is a very simple and yet a very beautiful reality. A lady, in white dress with black spots, sitting on a red sofa, a dark chocolate red, in the subdued light of her own quiet, prosaic French *appartment*, *le deuxime au dessus l'entre-sol.* The drawing is less angular, less constipated than that of "Olympe." How well the woman's body is in the dress! there is the bosom, the waist, the hips, the knees, and the white stockinged foot in the low shoe, coming from out the dress. The drawing about the hips and bosom undulates and floats, vague and yet precise, in a manner that recalls Harlem, and it is not until we turn to the face that we come upon ominous spaces unaccounted for, forms unexplained. The head is so charming that it seems a pity to press our examination further. But to understand Manet's deficiency is to understand the abyss that separates modern from ancient art, and the portrait of Madame

Morisot explains them as well as another, for the deficiency I wish to point out exists in Manet's best portraits as well as in his worst. The face in this picture is like the face in every picture by Manet. Three or four points are seized, and the spaces between are left unaccounted for. Whistler has not the strength of Velasquez; Manet is not as complete as Hals.

THE FAILURE OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY.

In the seventeenth century were Poussin and Claude; in the eighteenth Watteau, Boucher, Chardin, and many lesser lights—Fragonard, Pater, and Lancret. But notwithstanding the austere grandeur of Poussin and the beautiful, if somewhat too reasonable poetry of Claude, the infinite perfection of Watteau, the charm of that small French Velasquez Chardin, and the fascinations and essentially French genius of all this group (Poussin and Claude were entirely Roman), I think we must place France's artistic period in the nineteenth century.

Nineteenth century art began in France in the last years of the eighteenth century. It began well, for it began with its greatest painters—Ingres, Corot, and Delacroix. Ingres was born in 1780, Gericault in 1791, Corot in 1796, Delacroix in 1798, Diaz in 1809, Dupré in 1812, Rousseau in 1812, Jacques in 1813, Meissonier in 1815, Millet in 1815, Troyon in 1816, Daubigny in 1817, Courbet in 1819, Fromentin in 1820, Monticelli in 1824, Puvis de Chavannes in 1824, Cabanel in 1825, Hervier in 1827, Vollon in 1833, Manet in 1833, Degas in 1834. With a little indulgence the list might be considerably enlarged.

The circumstances in which this artistic manifestation took place were identical with the circumstances which brought about every one of the great artistic epochs. It came upon France as a consequence of huge national aspiration, when nationhood was desired and disaster had joined men together in struggle, and sent them forth on reckless adventure. It has been said that art is decay, the pearl in the oyster; but such belief seems at variance with any reading of history. The Greek sculptors came after Salamis and Marathon; the Italian renaissance came when Italy was distracted with revolution and was divided into opposing states. Great empires have not produced great men. Art came upon Holland after heroic wars in which the Dutchmen vehemently asserted their nationhood, defending their country against the Spaniard, even to the point of letting in the sea upon the invaders. Art came upon England when England was most adventurous, after the victories of Marlborough. Art came upon France after the great revolution, after the victories of Marengo and Austerlitz, after the burning of Moscow. A unique moment of nationhood gave birth to a long list of great artists, just as similar national enthusiasm gave birth to groups of great artists in England, in Holland, in Florence, in Venice, in Athens.

Having determined the century of France's artistic period we will ask where we shall place it amongst the artist period of the past. Comparison with Greece, Italy, or Venice is manifestly impossible; the names of Rembrandt, Hals, Ruysdael, Peter de Hooeh, Terburg, and Cuyp give us pause. We remember

the names of Ingres, Delacroix, Corot, Millet, and Degas. Even the divine name of Ingres cannot save the balance from sinking on the side of Holland. Then we think of Reynolds, Gainsborough, Romney, Wilson, and Morland, and wonder how they compare with the Frenchmen. The best brains were on the French side, they had more pictorial talent, and yet the school when taken as a whole is not so convincing as the English. Why, with better brains, and certainly more passion and desire of achievement, does the French school fall behind the English? Why, notwithstanding its extraordinary genius, does it come last in merit as it comes last in time amongst the world's artistic epochs? Has the nineteenth century brought any new intention into art which did not exist before in England, Holland, or Italy? Yes, the nineteenth century has brought a new intention into art, and I think that it is this very new intention that has caused the failure of the nineteenth century. To explain myself, I will have to go back to first principles.

In the beginning the beauty of man was the artist's single theme. Science had not then relegated man to his exact place in creation: he reigned triumphant, Nature appearing, if at all, only as a kind of aureole. The Egyptian, the Greek, and the Roman artists saw nothing, and cared for nothing, except man; the representation of his beauty, his power, and his grandeur was their whole desire, whether they carved or painted their intention, and I may say the result was the same. The painting of Apelles could not have differed from the sculpture

of Phidias; painting was not then separated from her elder sister. In the early ages there was but one art; even in Michael Angelo's time the difference between painting and sculpture was so slight as to be hardly worth considering. Is it possible to regard the "Last Judgment" as anything else but a coloured bas-relief, more complete and less perfect than the Greeks? Michael Angelo's artistic outlook was the same as Phidias'. One chose the "Last Judgment" and the other "Olympus," but both subjects were looked at from the same point of view. In each instance the question asked was—what opportunity do they afford for the display of marvellous human form? And when Michael Angelo carved the "Moses" and painted the "St. Jerome" he was as deaf and blind as any Greek to all other consideration save the opulence and the magic of drapery, the vehemence and the splendour of muscle. Nearly two thousand years had gone by and the artistic outlook had not changed at all; three hundred years have passed since Michael Angelo, and in those three hundred years what revolution has not been effected? How different our æstheticism, our aims, our objects, our desires, our aspiration, and how different our art!

After Michael Angelo painting and sculpture became separate arts: sculpture declined, and colour filled the whole artistic horizon. But this change was the only change; the necessities of the new medium had to be considered; but the Italian and Venetian painters continued to view life and art from the same side. Michael Angelo chose his subjects merely because

of the opportunities they offered for the delineation of form, Titian, Tintoretto, and Veronese chose theirs merely for the opportunities they offered for the display of colour. A new medium of expression had been discovered, that was all. The themes of their pictures were taken from the Bible, if you will, but the scenes they represented with so much pomp of colour were seen by them through the mystery of legend, and the vision was again sublimated by naïve belief and primitive aspiration.

The stories of the Old and New Testaments were not anecdotes; faith and ignorance had raised them above the anecdote, and they had become epics, whether by intensity of religious belief—as in the case of the monk of Fiesole—or by being given sublime artistic form—for paganism was not yet dead in the world—witness Leonardo, Raphael, and Andrea del Sarto. To these painters Biblical subjects were a mere pretext for representing man in all his attributes; and when the same subjects were treated by the Venetians, they were transformed in a pomp of colour, and by an absence of all *true* colour and by contempt for history and chronology became epical and fantastical. It is only necessary to examine any one of the works of the great Venetians to see that they bestowed hardly a thought on the subject of their pictures. When Titian painted the "Entombment of Christ," what did he see? A contrast—a white body, livid and dead, carried by full-blooded, red-haired Italians, who wept, and whose sorrow only served to make them more beautiful. That is how he understood a subject. The desire to be truthful

was not very great, nor was the desire to be new much more marked; to be beautiful was the first and last letter of a creed of which we know very little to-day.

Art died in Italy, and the subject had not yet appeared; and at the end of the sixteenth century the first painters of the great Dutch school were born, and before 1650 a new school, entirely original, having nothing in common with anything that had gone before, had formulated its æstheticism and produced masterpieces. In these masterpieces we find no suspicion of anything that might be called a subject; the absence of subject is even more conspicuous in the Dutchmen than in the Italians. In the Italian painters the subject passed unperceived in a pomp of colour or a Pagan apotheosis of humanity; in the Dutchmen it is dispensed with altogether. No longer do we read of miracles or martyrdoms, but of the most ordinary incidents of everyday life. Turning over the first catalogue to hand of Dutch pictures, I read: "View of a Plain, with shepherd, cows, and sheep in the foreground;" "The White Horse in the Riding School;" "A Lady Playing the Virginal;" "Peasants Drinking Outside a Tavern;" "Peasants Drinking in a Tavern;" "Peasants Gambling Outside a Tavern;" "Brick-making in a Landscape;" "The Wind-mill;" "The Water-mill;" "Peasants Bringing Home the Hay." And so on, and so on. If we meet with a military skirmish, we are not told where the skirmish took place, nor what troops took part in the skirmish. "A Skirmish in a Rocky Pass" is all the information that is vouchsafed to us. Italian art is invention from

end to end, in Dutch art no slightest trace of invention is to be found; one art is purely imaginative, the other is plainly realistic; and yet, at an essential point, the two arts coincide; in neither does the subject prevail; and if Dutch art is more truthful than Italian art, it is because they were unimaginative, stay-at-home folk, whose feet did not burn for foreign travel, and whose only resource was, therefore, to reproduce the life around them, and into that no element of curiosity could come. For their whole country was known to them; even when they left their native town they still continued to paint what they had seen since they were little children.

And, like Italian, Dutch art died before the subject had appeared. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that the subject really began to make itself felt, and, like the potato blight or phylloxera, it soon became clear that it had come to stay. I think Greuze was the first to conceive a picture after the fashion of a scene in a play—I mean those domestic dramas which he invented, and in which the interest of the subject so clearly predominates—"The Prodigal Son," for instance. In this picture we have the domestic drama exactly as a stage manager would set it forth. The indignant father, rising from table, prepares to anathematise the repentant son, who stands on the threshold, the weeping mother begs forgiveness for her son, the elder girl advances shyly, the younger children play with their toys, and the serving-girl drops the plate of meat which she is bringing in. And ever since the subject has taken first place in the art of France,

England, and Germany, and in like measure as the subject made itself felt, so did art decline.

For the last hundred years painters seem to have lived in libraries rather than in studios. All literatures and all the sciences have been pressed into the service of painting, and an Academy catalogue is in itself a liberal education. In it you can read choice extracts from the Bible, from Shakespeare, from Goethe, from Dante. You can dip into Greek and Latin literature, history—ancient and modern—you can learn something of all mythologies—Pagan, Christian, and Hindoo; if your taste lies in the direction of Icelandic legends, you will not be disappointed in your sixpennyworth. For the last hundred years the painter seems to have neglected nothing except to learn how to paint.

For more than a hundred years painting has been in service. She has acted as a sort of handmaiden to literature, her mission being to make clear to the casual and the unlettered what the lettered had already understood and enjoyed in a more subtle and more erudite form. But to pass from the abstract to the concrete, and, so far as regards subject, to make my meaning quite clear to every one, I cannot do better than to ask my readers to recall Mr. Luke Fildes' picture of "The Doctor." No better example could be selected of a picture in which the subject is the supreme interest. True that Mr. Fildes has not taken his subject from novel or poem; in this picture he may have been said to have been his own librettist, and perhaps for that very reason the subject is the one preponderating interest in the picture. He who

doubts if this be so has only to ask himself if any critic thought of pointing to any special passage of colour in this picture, of calling attention to the quality of the modelling or the ability of the drawing. No; what attracted attention was the story. Would the child live or die? Did that dear, good doctor entertain any hopes of the poor little thing's recovery? And the poor parents, how grieved they seemed! Perhaps it is their only child. The picture is typical of contemporary art, which is nearly all conceived in the same spirit, and can therefore have no enduring value. And if by chance the English artist does occasionally escape from the vice of subject for subject's sake, he almost invariably slips into what I may called the derivative vices—exactness of costume, truth of effect and local colour. To explain myself on this point, I will ask the reader to recall any one of Mr. Alma Tadema's pictures; it matters not a jot which is chosen. That one, for instance, where, in a circular recess of white marble, Sappho reads to a Greek poet, or is it the young man who is reading to Sappho and her maidens? The interest of the picture is purely archæological. According to the very latest researches, the ornament which Greek women wore in their hair was of such a shape, and Mr. Tadema has reproduced the shape in his picture. Further researches are made, and it is discovered that that ornament was not worn until a hundred years later. The picture is therefore deprived of some of its interest, and the researches of the next ten years may make it appear as old-fashioned as the Greek pictures of the last two genera-

tions appear in our eyes to-day. Until then it is as interesting as a page of Smith's *Classical Dictionary*. We look at it and we say, "How curious! And that was how the Greeks washed and dressed themselves!"

When Mr. Holman Hunt conceived the idea of a picture of Christ earning His livelihood by the sweat of His brow, it seemed to him to be quite necessary to go to Jerusalem. There he copied a carpenter's shop from nature, and he filled it with Arab tools and implements, feeling sure that, the manners and customs having changed but little in the East, it was to be surmised that such tools and implements must be nearly identical with those used eighteen centuries ago. To dress the Virgin in sumptuous flowing robes, as Raphael did, was clearly incorrect; the Virgin was a poor woman, and could not have worn more than a single garment, and the garment she wore probably resembled the dress of the Arab women of the present day, and so on and so on. Through the window we see the very landscape that Christ looked upon. From the point of view of the art critic of the *Daily Telegraph* nothing could be better; the various sites and prospects are explained and commented upon, and the heart of middle-class England beats in sympathetic response. But the real picture-lover sees nothing save two geometrically drawn figures placed in the canvas like diagrams in a book of Euclid. And the picture being barren of artistic interest, his attention is caught by the Virgin's costume, and the catalogue informs him that Mr. Hunt's model was an Arab woman in Jerusalem,

whose dress in all probability resembled the dress the Virgin wore two thousand years ago. The carpenter's shop he is assured is most probably an exact counterpart of the carpenter's shop in which Christ worked. How very curious! how very curious!

Curiosity in art has always been a corruptive influence, and the art of our century is literally putrid with curiosity. Perhaps the desire of home was never so fixed and so real in any race as some would have us believe. At all times there have been men whose feet itched for travel; even in Holland, the country above all others which gave currency to the belief in the stay-at-home instinct, there were always adventurous spirits who yearned for strange skies and lands. It was this desire of travel that destroyed the art of Holland in the seventeenth century. I can hardly imagine an article that would be more instructive and valuable than one dealing precisely with those Dutchmen who went to Italy in quest of romance, poetry, and general artistic culture, for travel has often had an injurious effect on art. I do not say foreign travel, I say any travel. The length of the journey counts for nothing, once the painter's inspiration springs from the novelty of the colour, or the character of the landscape, or the interest that a strange costume suggests. There are painters who have never been further than Maidenhead, and who bring back what I should call *notes de voyage;* there are others who have travelled round the world and have produced general aspects bearing neither stamp nor certificate of mileage—in other words, pictures. There are, therefore, two men who

must not be confused one with the other, the traveller that paints and the painter that travels.

Every day we hear of a painter who has been to Norway, or to Brittany, or to Wales, or to Algeria, and has come back with sixty-five sketches, which are now on view, let us say, at Messrs. Dowdeswell's Galleries, in New Bond Street, the home of all such exhibitions. The painter has been impressed by the savagery of fiords, by the prettiness of blouses and sabots, by the blue mountain in the distance and the purple mountain in the foreground, by the narrow shade of the street, and the solemnity of a *burnous* or the grace of a *haik* floating in the wind. The painter brings back these sights and scenes as a child brings back shells from the shore—they seemed very strange and curious, and, therefore, like the child, he brought back, not the things themselves, but the next best things, the most faithful sketches he could make of them. To understand how impossible it is to paint *pictures* in a foreign country, we have only to imagine a young English painter setting up his easel in, let us say, Algeria. There he finds himself confronted with a new world; everything is different: the costumes are strange, the rhythm of the lines is different, the effects are harsh and unknown to him; at home the earth is dark and the sky is light, in Algeria the everlasting blue must be darker than the white earth, and the key of colour widely different from anything he has seen before. Selection is impossible, he cannot distinguish between the important and the unimportant; everything strikes him with equal vividness. To change anything of this

country, so clear, so precise, so characteristic, is to soften; to alleviate what is too rude, is to weaken; to generalise, is to disfigure. So the artist is obliged to take Algiers in the lump; in spite of himself he will find himself forced into a scrupulous exactitude, nothing must be passed over, and so his pictures are at best only the truth, photographic truth and the naturalness of a fac-simile.

The sixty-five drawings which the painter will bring back and will exhibit in Messrs. Dowdeswell's will be documentary evidence of the existence of Algeria —of all that makes a country itself, of exactly the things by which those who have been there know it, of the things which will make it known to those who have not been there, the exact type of the inhabitants, their costume, their attitudes, their ways, and manner of living. Once the painter accepts truth for aim and end, it becomes impossible to set a limit upon his investigations. We shall learn how this people dress, ride, and hunt; we shall learn what arms they use—the painter will describe them as well as a pencil may describe—the harness of the horses he must know and understand; through dealing with so much novelty it becomes obligatory for the travelling painter to become explanatory and categorical. And as the attraction of the unknown corresponds in most people to the immoral instinct of curiosity, the painter will find himself forced to attempt to do with paint and canvas what he could do much better in a written account. His public will demand pictures composed after the manner of an inventory, and the taste for ethno-

graphy will end by being confused with the sentiment of beauty.

Amongst this collection of *documents* which causes the Gallery to resound with foolish and vapid chatter there are two small pictures. Every one has passed by them, but now an artist is examining them, and they are evidently the only two things in the exhibition that interest him. One is entitled "Sunset on the Nile," an impression of the melancholy of evening; the other is entitled "Pilgrims," a band of travellers passing up a sandy tract, an impression of hot desert solitudes.

And now I will conclude with an anecdote taken from one to whom I owe much. Two painters were painting on the banks of the Seine. Suddenly a shepherd passed driving before him a long flock of sheep, silhouetting with supple movement upon the water whitening under a grey sky at the end of April. The shepherd had his scrip on his back, he wore the great felt hat and the gaiters of the herdsman, two black dogs, picturesque in form, trotted at his heels, for the flock was going in excellent order. "Do you know," cried one painter to the other, "that nothing is more interesting to paint than a shepherd on the banks of *a river*?" He did not say the Seine—he said a river.

ARTISTIC EDUCATION IN FRANCE AND ENGLAND.

Is the introduction of the subject into art the one and only cause for the defeat of the brilliant genius which the Revolution and the victories of Napoleon called into existence? Are there not other modern and special signs which distinguish the nineteenth century French schools from all the schools that preceded it? I think there are.

Throwing ourselves back in our chairs, let us think of this French school in its *ensemble.* What extraordinary variety! What an absence of fixed principle! curiosity, fever, impatience, hurry, anxiety, desire touching on hysteria. An enormous expenditure of force, but spent in so many different and contrary directions, that the sum-total of the result seems a little less than we had expected. Throwing ourselves back in our chairs, and closing our eyes a second time, let us think of our eighteenth century English school. Is it not like passing from the glare and vicarious holloaing of the street into a quiet, grave assembly of well-bred men, who are not afraid to let each other speak, and know how to make themselves heard without shouting; men who choose their words so well that they afford to speak without emphasis, and in whose speech you find

neither neologisms, nor inversions, nor grammatical extravagances, nor calculated brutalities, nor affected ignorance, nor any faintest trace of pedantry? What these men have to say is more or less interesting, but they address us in the same language, and however arbitrarily we may place them, though we hang a pig-stye by Morland next to a duchess by Gainsborough, we are surprised by a pleasant air of family likeness in the execution. We feel, however differently these men see and think, that they are content to express themselves in the same language. Their work may be compared to various pieces of music played on an instrument which was common property; they were satisfied with the instrument, and preferred to compose new music for it than to experiment with the instrument itself.

It may be argued that in the lapse of a hundred years the numerous differences of method which characterise modern painting will disappear, and that it will seem as uniform to the eyes of the twenty-first century as the painting of the eighteenth century seems in our eyes to-day. I do not think this will be so. And in proof of this opinion I will refer again to the differences of opinion regarding the first principles of painting and drawing which divided Ingres and Géricault. Differences regarding first principles never existed between the leaders of any other artistic movement. Not between Michael Angelo and Raphael, not between Veronese, Tintoretto, Titian, and Rubens; not between Hals or any other Dutchman, except Rembrandt, born between 1600 and 1640; or between

Van Dyck and Reynolds and Gainsborough. Nor must the difference between the methods of Giotto and Titian cause any one to misunderstand my meaning. The change that two centuries brought into art was a gradual change, corresponding exactly to the ideas which the painter wished to express; each method was sufficient to explain the ideas current at the time it was invented for that purpose; it served that purpose and no more.

Facilities for foreign travel, international exhibitions, and cosmopolitanism have helped to keep artists of all countries in a ferment of uncertainty regarding even the first principles of their art. But this is not all; education has proved a vigorous and rapid solvent, and has completed the disintegration of art. A young man goes to the Beaux Arts; he is taught how to measure the model with his pencil, and how to determine the movement of the model with his plumb-line. He is taught how to draw by the masses rather than by the character, and the advantages of this teaching permit him, if he is an intelligent fellow, to produce at the end of two years' hard labour a measured, angular, constipated drawing, a sort of inferior photograph. He is then set to painting, and the instruction he receives amounts to this—that he must not rub the paint about with his brush as he rubbed the chalk with his paper stump. After a long methodical study of the model, an attempt is made to prepare a corresponding tone; no medium must be used; and when the large square brush is filled full of sticky, clogging pigment it is drawn half an inch

down and then half an inch across the canvas, and the painter must calculate how much he can finish at a sitting, for this system does not admit of re-touchings. It is practised in all the French studios, where it is known as *la peinture au premier coup.*

A clever young man, a man of talent, labours at art in the manner I have described from eight to ten hours a day, and at the end of six or seven years his education is completed. During the long while of his pupilage he has heard, "first learn your trade, and then do what you like." The time has arrived for him to do what he likes. He already suspects that the mere imitation of MM. Bouguereau and Lefebvre will bring him neither fame nor money; he soon finds that is so, and it becomes clear to him he must do something different. Enticing vistas of possibilities open out before him, but he is like a man whose limbs have been kept too long in splints—they are frozen; and he at length understands the old and terrible truth: as the twig is bent so will it grow. The skin he would slough will not be sloughed; he tries all the methods—robust executions, lymphatic executions, sentimental and insipid executions, painstaking executions, cursive and impertinent executions. Through all these the Beaux Arts student, if he is intelligent enough to perceive the falseness and worthlessness of his primary education, slowly works his way. He is like a vessel without ballast; he is like a blindfolded man who has missed his pavement; he is blown from wave to wave; he is confused with contradictory cries. Last year he was robust, this year he is lymphatic; he affects learning which he

does not possess, and then he assumes airs of ignorance, equally unreal—a mild, sophisticated ignorance, which he calls *naïveté.* And these various executions he is never more than superficially acquainted with; he does not practise any one long enough to extract what good there may be in it.

To set before the reader the full story of the French decadence, I should have to relate the story of the great schism of some few years ago, when the pedants remained at the *Salon* under the headship of Mr. Bouguereau, and the experimentalists followed Meissonier to the Champs de Mars.[1] The authoritative name of Meissonier, the genius of Puvis de Chavannes, and the interest of the exhibition of Stevens' early work, sufficed for some years to disguise the progress and the tendency of the declension of French art; and it was not until last year (1892) that it was impossible to doubt any longer that the great French renaissance of the beginning of the century had worn itself out, that the last leaves were falling, and that probably a long period of winter rest was preparing. French art has resolved itself into pedants and experimentalists! The *Salon* is now like to a library of Latin verses composed by the Eton and Harrow masters and their pupils; the Champs de Mars like a costume ball at Elysée Montmartre.

In England it is customary for art to enter by a side door, and the enormous subvention to the Kensington Schools would never have been voted by Parliament if the bill had not been gilt with the usual utility gilding. It was represented that the schools

[1] See "Impressions and Opinions."

were intended for something much more serious than the mere painting of pictures, which only rich people could buy: the schools were primarily intended as schools of design, wherein the sons and daughters of the people would be taught how to design wall-papers, patterns for lace, curtains, damask table-cloths, etc. The intention, like many another, was excellent; but the fact remains that, except for examination purposes, the work done by Kensington students is useless. A design for a piece of wall-paper, for which a Kensington student is awarded a medal, is almost sure to prove abortive when put to a practical test. The isolated pattern looks pretty enough on the two feet of white paper on which it is drawn; but when the pattern is manifolded, it is usually found that the designer has not taken into account the effect of the repetition. That is the pitfall into which the Kensington student usually falls; he cannot make practical application of his knowledge, and at Minton's factory all the designs drawn by Kensington students have to be redrawn by those who understand the practical working out of the processes of reproduction and the quality of the material employed. So complete is the failure of the Kensington student, that to plead a Kensington education is considered to be an almost fatal objection against any one applying for work in any of our industrial centres.

Five-and-twenty years ago the schools of art at South Kensington were the most comical in the world; they were the most complete parody on the Continental school of art possible to imagine. They are no doubt the same to-day as they were five-and-

twenty years ago—any way, the educational result is the same. The schools as I remember them were faultless in everything except the instruction dispensed there. There were noble staircases, the floors were covered with cocoa-nut matting, the rooms admirably heated with hot-water pipes, there were plaster casts and officials. In the first room the students practised drawing from the flat. Engraved outlines of elaborate ornamentation were given them, and these they drew with lead pencil, measuring the spaces carefully with compasses. In about six months or a year the student had learned to use his compass correctly, and to produce a fine hard black-lead outline; the harder and finer the outline, the more the drawing looked like a problem in a book of Euclid, the better the examiner was pleased, and the more willing was he to send the student to the room upstairs, where drawing was practised from the antique.

This was the room in which the wisdom of South Kensington attained a complete efflorescence. I shall never forget the scenes I witnessed there. Having made choice of a cast, the student proceeded to measure the number of heads; he then measured the cast in every direction, and ascertained by means of a plumb-line exactly where the lines fell. It was more like land-surveying than drawing, and to accomplish this portion of his task took generally a fortnight, working six hours a week. He then placed a sheet of tissue paper upon his drawing, leaving only one small part uncovered, and, having reduced his chalk pencil to the finest possible point, he proceeded to

lay in a set of extremely fine lines. These were crossed by a second set of lines, and the two sets of lines were elaborately stippled, every black spot being carefully picked out with bread. With a patience truly sublime in its folly, he continued the process all the way down the figure, accomplishing, if he were truly industrious, about an inch square in the course of an evening. Our admiration was generally directed to those who had spent the longest time on their drawings. After three months' work a student began to be noticed; at the end of four he became an important personage. I remember one who had contrived to spend six months on his drawing. He was a sort of demigod, and we used to watch him anxious and alarmed lest he might not have the genius to devote still another month to it, and our enthusiasm knew no bounds when we learned that, a week before the drawings had to be sent in, he had taken his drawing home and spent three whole days stippling it and picking out the black spots with bread.

The poor drawing had neither character nor consistency; it looked like nothing under the sun, except a drawing done at Kensington — a flat, foolish thing, but very soft and smooth. But this was enough; it was passed by the examiners, and the student went into the Life Room to copy an Italian model as he had copied the Apollo Belvedere. Once or twice a week a gentleman who painted tenth-rate pictures, which were not always hung in the Academy, came round and passed casual remarks on the quality of the stippling.

There was a head-master who painted tenth-rate historical pictures, after the manner of a tenth-rate German painter in a provincial town, in a vast studio upstairs, which the State was good enough to provide him with, and he occasionally walked through the studios; on an average, I should say, once a month.

The desire to organise art proceeded in France from a love of system, and in England from a love of respectability. To the ordinary mind there is something especially reassuring in medals, crowns, examinations, professors, and titles; and since the founding of the Kensington Schools we unfortunately hear no more of parents opposing their children's wishes to become artists. The result of all these facilities for art study has been to swamp natural genius and to produce enormous quantities of vacuous little water colours and slimy little oil colours. Young men have been prevented from going to Australia and Canada and becoming rough farmers, and young ladies from following them and becoming rough wives and the mothers of healthy children. Instead of such natural emigration and extension of the race, febrile little pilgrimages have been organised to Paris and Grey, whence astonishing methods and theories regarding the conditions, under which painting alone can be accomplished, have been brought back. Original Kensington stipple has been crossed with square brush-work, and the mule has been bred in and in with open brush-work, and fresh strains have been sought in the execution at the angle of forty-five; art has become infinitely hybrid and definitely sterile.

Must we then conclude that all education is an evil? Why exaggerate; why outstrip the plain telling of the facts? For those who are thinking of adopting art as a profession it is sufficient to know that the one irreparable evil is a bad primary education. Be sure that after five years of the Beaux Arts you cannot become a great painter. Be sure that after five years of Kensington you can never become a painter at all. "If not at Kensington nor at the Beaux Arts, where am I to obtain the education I stand in need of?" cries the embarrassed student. I do not propose to answer that question directly. How the masters of Holland and Flanders obtained their marvellous education is not known. We neither know how they learned nor how they painted. Did the early masters paint first in monochrome, adding the colouring matter afterwards? Much vain conjecturing has been expended in attempting to solve this question. Did Ruysdale paint direct from nature or from drawings? Unfortunately on this question history has no single word to say. We know that Potter learned his trade in the fields in lonely communication with nature. We know too that Crome was a house-painter, and practised painting from nature when his daily work was done. Nevertheless he attained as perfect a technique as any painter that ever lived. Morland, too, was self-taught: he practised painting in the fields and farmyards and the country inns where he lived, oftentimes paying for board and lodging with a picture. Did his art suffer from want of education? Is there any one who believes that Morland would have done better work if he had spent three

or four years stippling drawings from the antique at South Kensington?

I will conclude these remarks, far too cursive and incomplete, with an anecdote which, I think, will cause the thoughtful to ponder. Some seven or eight years ago, Renoir, a painter of rare talent and originality, after twenty years of struggle with himself and poverty, succeeded in attaining a very distinct and personal expression of his individuality. Out of a hundred influences he had succeeded in extracting an art as beautiful as it was new. His work was beginning to attract buyers. For the first time in his life he had a little money in hand, and he thought he would like a holiday. Long reading of novels leads the reader to suppose that he found his ruin in a period of riotous living, the reaction induced by anxiety and over-work. Not at all. He did what every wise friend would have advised him to do under the circumstances: he went to Venice to study Tintoretto. The magnificences of this master struck him through with the sense of his own insignificance; he became aware of the fact that he could not draw like Tintoretto; and when he returned to Paris he resolved to subject himself to two years of hard study in an art school. For two years he laboured in the life class, working on an average from seven to ten hours a day, and in two years he had utterly destroyed every trace of the charming and delightful art which had taken him twenty years to build up. I know of no more tragic story—do you?

INGRES AND COROT.

Of the thirty or more great artists who made the artistic movement at the beginning of the century in France, five will, I think, exercise a prolonged influence on the art of the future—Ingres, Corot, Millet, Manet, and Degas.

The omission of the name of Delacroix will surprise many; but though Delacroix will engage the attention of artists as they walk through the Louvre, I do not think that they will turn to him for counsel in their difficulty, or that they will learn from him any secrets of their craft. In the great masters of pictorial composition—Michael Angelo, Veronese, Tintoretto, and Rubens—the passion and tumult of the work resides solely in the conception; the execution is always calculated, and the result is perfectly predetermined and accurately foreseen. To explain myself I will tell an anecdote which is always told whenever Delacroix's name is mentioned, without, however, the true significance of the anecdote being perceived. After seeing Constable's pictures, Delacroix repainted one of his most important works from end to end.

Of Degas[1] and Manet I have spoken elsewhere.

[1] See essay on Degas in "Impressions and Opinions."

Millet seems to me to be a sort of nineteenth century Greuze. The subject-matter is different, but at bottom the art of these two painters is more alike than is generally supposed. Neither was a painter in any true sense of the word, and if the future learns anything from Millet, it will be how to separate the scene from the environment which absorbs it, how to sacrifice the background, how to suggest rather than to point out, and how by a series of ellipses to lead the spectator to imagine what is not there. The student may learn from Millet that it was by sometimes servilely copying nature, sometimes by neglecting nature, that the old masters succeeded in conveying not an illusion but an impression of life.

But of all nineteenth century painters Ingres and Corot seem most sure of future life; their claim upon the attention and the admiration of future artists seems the most securely founded. Looked at from a certain side Ingres seems for sheer perfection to challenge antiquity. Of Michael Angelo there can never be any question; he stands alone in a solitude of greatness. Phidias himself is not so much alone. For the art of Apelles could not have differed from that of Phidias; and the intention of many a drawing by Apelles must have been identical with that of "La Source." It is difficult to imagine what further beauty he may have introduced into a face, or what further word he might have had to say on the beauty of a virgin body.

The legs alone suggest the possibility of censure. Ingres repainted the legs when the picture was finished and the model was not before him, so the idea obtains among artists that the legs are what are

least perfect in the picture. In repainting the legs his object was omission of detail with a view to concentration of attention on the upper part of the figure. It must not however be supposed that the legs are what is known among painters as empty; they have been simplified; their synthetic expression has been found; and if the teaching at the Beaux Arts forbids the present generation to understand such drawing, the fault lies with the state that permits the Beaux Arts, and not with Ingres, whose genius was not crushed by it. The suggestion that Ingres spoilt the legs of "La Source" by repainting them when the model was not before him could come from nowhere but the Beaux Arts.

That Ingres was not so great an artist as Raphael I am aware. That Ingres' drawings show none of the dramatic inventiveness of Raphael's drawings is so obvious that I must apologise for such a commonplace. Raphael's drawings were done with a different intention from Ingres'; Raphael's drawings were no more than rough memoranda, and in no instance did he attempt to carry a drawing to the extreme limit that Ingres did. Ingres' drawing is one thing, Raphael's is another; still I would ask if any one thinks that Raphael could have carried a drawing as far as Ingres? I would ask if any of Raphael's drawings are as beautiful, as perfect, or as instructive as Ingres'. Take, for example, the pencil drawing in the Louvre, the study for the odalisque: who except a Greek could have produced so perfect a drawing? I can imagine Apelles doing something like it, but no one else.

When you go to the Louvre examine that line of back, return the next day and the next, and consider its infinite perfection before you conclude that my appreciation is exaggerated. Think of the learning and the love that were necessary for the accomplishment of such exquisite simplifications. Never did pencil follow an outline with such penetrating and unwearying passion, or clasp and enfold it with such simple and sufficient modelling. Nowhere can you detect a starting-point or a measurement taken; it seems to have grown as a beautiful tendril grows, and every curve sways as mysteriously, and the perfection seems as divine. Beside it Dürer would seem crabbed and puzzle-headed; Holbein would seem angular and geometrical; Da Vinci would seem vague: and I hope that no critic by partial quotation will endeavour to prove me guilty of having said that Ingres was a greater artist than Da Vinci. I have not said any such thing; I have merely striven by aid of comparison to bring before the reader some sense of the miraculous beauty of one of Ingres' finest pencil drawings.

Or let us choose the well-known drawing of the Italian lady sitting in the Louis XV. arm-chair, her long curved and jewelled hand lying in her lap and a coiffure of laces pinned down with a long jewelled hair-pin. How her head-dress of large laces decorates the paper, and the elaborate working out of the pattern, is it not a miracle of handicraft? How exquisite the black curls on the forehead, and how they balance the dark eyes which are the depth and centre of the composition! The necklace, how well the

stones are heaped, how well they lie together! How well their weight and beauty are expressed! And the earrings, how enticing in their intricate workmanship. Then the movement of the face, how full it is of the indolent south, and the oval of the face is composed to harmonise and enhance the lace head-dress; and its outline, though full of classical simplifications, tells the character with Holbein-like fidelity; it falls away into a soft, weak chin in which resides a soft sensual lassitude. The black eyes are set like languid stars in the face, and the flesh rounds off softly, like a sky, modelled with a little shadow, part of the outline, and expressing its beauty. And then there are the marvels of the dress to consider: the perfect and spontaneous creation of the glitter of the long silk arms, and the muslin of the wrists, soft as foliage, and then the hardness of the bodice stitched with jewellery and set so romantically on the almost epicene bosom.

It is the essentially Greek quality of perfection that brings Corot and Ingres together. They are perfect, as none other since the Greek sculptors has been perfect. Other painters have desired beauty at intervals as passionately as they, none save the Greeks so continuously; and the desire to be merely beautiful seemed, if possible, to absorb the art of Corot even more completely than it did that of Ingres. Among the numerous pictures, sketches, and drawings which he left you will find weakness, repetitions, even commonplace, but ugliness never. An ugly set of lines is not to be found in Corot; the rhythm may sometimes be weak, but his lines never run out of

metre. For the rhythm of line as well as of sound the artist must seek in his own soul; he will never find it in the inchoate and discordant jumble which we call nature.

And, after all, what is art but rhythm? Corot knew that art is nature made rhythmical, and so he was never known to take out a six-foot canvas to copy nature on. Being an artist, he preferred to observe nature, and he lay down and dreamed his fields and trees, and he walked about in his landscape, selecting his point of view, determining the rhythm of his lines. That sense of rhythm which I have defined as art was remarkable in him even from his first pictures. In the "Castle of St. Angelo, Rome," for instance, the placing of the buildings, one low down, the other high up in the picture, the bridge between, and behind the bridge the dome of St. Peter's, is as faultless a composition as his maturest work. As faultless, and yet not so exquisite. For it took many long and pensive years to attain the more subtle and delicate rhythms of "The Lake" in the collection of J. S. Forbes, Esq., or the landscape in the collection of G. N. Stevens, Esq., or the "Ravine" in the collection of Sir John Day.

Corot's style changed; but it changed gradually, as nature changes, waxing like the moon from a thin, pure crescent to a full circle of light. Guided by a perfect instinct, he progressed, fulfilling the course of his artistic destiny. We notice change, but each change brings fuller beauty. And through the long and beautiful year of Corot's genius—full as the year

itself of months and seasons—we notice that the change that comes over his art is always in the direction of purer and more spiritual beauty. We find him more and more absorbed in the emotion that the landscape conveys, more willing to sacrifice the superfluous and circumstantial for the sake of the immortal beauty of things.

Look at the "Lac de Garde" and say if you can that the old Greek melody is not audible in the line which bends and floats to the lake's edge, in the massing and the placing of those trees, in the fragile grace of the broken birch which sweeps the "pale complexioned sky." Are we not looking into the heart of nature, and do we not hear the silence that is the soul of evening? In this, his perfect period, he is content to leave his foreground rubbed over with some expressive grey, knowing well that the eye rests not there, and upon his middle distance he will lavish his entire art, concentrating his picture on some one thing in which for him resides the true reality of the place; be this the evening ripples on the lake or the shimmering of the willow leaves as the last light dies out of the sky.

I only saw Corot once. It was in some woods near Paris, where I had gone to paint, and I came across the old gentleman unexpectedly, seated in front of his easel in a pleasant glade. After admiring his work I ventured to say: "Master, what you are doing is lovely, but I cannot find your composition in the landscape before us." He said: "My foreground is a long way ahead," and sure enough, nearly two hundred yards away, his picture rose out of the dimness of the

dell, stretching a little beyond the vista into the meadow.

The anecdote seems to me to be a real lesson in the art of painting, for it shows us the painter in his very employment of nature, and we divine easily the transposition in the tones and in the aspect of things that he was engaged in bringing into that picture. And to speak of transpositions leads us inevitably into consideration of the great secret of Corot's art, his employment of what is known in studios as values.

By values is meant the amount of light and shadow contained in a tone. The relation of a half-tint to the highest light, which is represented by the white paper, the relation of a shadow to the deepest black, which is represented by the chalk pencil, is easy enough to perceive in a drawing; but when the work is in colour the values, although not less real, are more difficult to estimate. For a colour can be considered from two points of view: either as so much colouring matter, or as so much light and shade. Violet, for instance, contains not only red and blue in proportions which may be indefinitely varied, but also certain proportions of light and shade; the former tending towards the highest light, represented on the palette by flake white; the latter tending towards the deepest dark, represented on the palette by ivory black.

Similar to a note in music, no colour can be said to be in itself either false or true, ugly or beautiful. A note and a colour acquire beauty and ugliness according to their associations; therefore to colour

well depends, in the first instance, on the painter's knowledge and intimate sense of the laws of contrast and similitude. But there is still another factor in the art of colouring well; for, just as the musician obtains richness and novelty of expression by means of a distribution of sound through the instruments of the orchestra, so does the painter obtain depth and richness through a judicious distribution of values. If we were to disturb the distribution of values in the pictures of Titian, Rubens, Veronese, their colour would at once seem crude, superficial, without cohesion or rarity. But some will aver that if the colour is right the values must be right too. However plausible this theory may seem, the practice of those who hold it amply demonstrates its untruth. It is interesting and instructive to notice how those who seek the colour without regard for the values inherent in the colouring matter never succeed in producing more than a certain shallow superficial brilliancy; the colour of such painters is never rich or profound, and although it may be beautiful, it is always wanting in the element of romantic charm and mystery.

The colour is the melody, the values are the orchestration of the melody; and as the orchestration serves to enrich the melody, so do the values enrich the colour. And as melody may—nay, must—exist, if the orchestration be really beautiful, so colour must inhere wherever the values have been finely observed. In Rembrandt, the colour is brown and a white faintly tinted with bitumen; in Claude, the colour is blue, faintly flushed with yellow in the

middle sky, and yet none has denied the right of these painters to be considered colourists. They painted with the values—that is to say, with what remains on the palette when abstraction has been made of the colouring matter—a delicate neutral tint of infinite subtlety and charm; and it is with this, the evanescent and impalpable soul of the vanished colours, that the most beautiful pictures are painted. Corot, too, is a conspicuous example of this mode of painting. His right to stand among the world's colourists has never, so far as I know, been seriously contested, his pictures are almost void of colouring matter—a blending of grey and green, and yet the result is of a richly coloured evening.

Corot and Rembrandt, as Dutilleux pointed out, arrived at the same goal by absolutely different ends. He saw clearly, although he could not express himself quite clearly, that, above all painters, Rembrandt and Corot excelled in that mode of pictorial expression known as values, or shall I say chiaroscuro, for in truth he who has said values has hinted chiaroscuro. Rembrandt told all that a golden ray falling through a darkened room awakens in a visionary brain; Corot told all that the grey light of morning and evening whispers in the pensive mind of the elegiac poet. The story told was widely different, but the manner of telling was the same: one attenuated in the light, the other attenuated in the shadow: both sacrificed the corners with a view to fixing the attention on the one spot in which the soul of the picture lives.

All schools have not set great store on values, although all schools have set great store on drawing

and colour. Values seem to have come and gone in and out of painting like a fashion. One generation hardly gives the matter a thought, the succeeding generation finds the whole charm of its art in values. It would be difficult to imagine a more interesting and instructive history than the history of values in painting. It is far from my scheme to write such a history, but I wish that such a history were written, for then we should see clearly how unwise were they who neglected the principle, and how much they lost. I would only call attention to how the principle came to be reintroduced into French art in the beginning of this century. It came from Holland *viâ* England through the pictures of Turner and Constable. It was an Anglo-Dutch influence that roused French art, then slumbering in the pseudo-classicisms of the First Empire; and, half-awakened, French art turned its eyes to Holland for inspiration; and values, the foundation and corner-stone of Dutch art, became almost at a bound a first article of faith in the artistic creed. In 1830 values came upon France like a religion. Rembrandt was the new Messiah, Holland was the Holy Land, and disciples were busy dispensing the propaganda in every studio.

Since the bad example of Greuze, literature had wound round every branch of painting until painting seemed to disappear in the parasite like an oak under a cloud of ivy. The excess had been great —a reaction was inevitable—and Rembrandt, with his Biblical legends, furnished the necessary transition. But when a taste for painting had been reacquired, one after the other the Dutch painters

became the fashion. It is almost unnecessary to point out the influence of Hobbema on the art of Rousseau. Corot was less affected by the Dutchmen, or, to speak more exactly, he assimilated more completely what he had learnt from them than his rival was able to do. Moreover, what he took from Holland came to him through Ruysdael rather than through Hobbema.

The great morose dreamer, contemplative and grave as Wordsworth, must have made more direct and intimate appeal to Corot's soul than the charm and the gaiety of Hobbema's water-mills. Be this as it may, it was Holland that revived the long-forgotten science of values in the Barbizon painters. They sought their art in the direction of values, and very easily Corot took the lead as chief exponent of the new principle; and he succeeded in applying the principle of values to landscape painting as fully as Rembrandt had to figure painting.

But at the moment when the new means of expression seemed most distinctly established and understood, it was put aside and lost sight of by a new generation of painters, and, curiously enough, by the men who had most vigorously proclaimed the beauty and perfection of the art which was to be henceforth, at least in practice, their mission to repudiate. For I take it that the art of the impressionists has nothing whatever in common with the art of Corot. True, that Corot's aim was to render his impression of his subject, no matter whether it was a landscape or a figure; in this aim he differed in no wise from Giotto and Van Eyck; but we are

not considering Corot's aims but his means of expression, and his means of expression were the very opposite to those employed by Monet and the school of Monet. Not with half-tints in which colour disappears are Monet and his school concerned, but with the brilliant vibration of colour in the full light, with open spaces where the light is reflected back and forward, and nature is but a prism filled with dazzling and iridescent tints.

I remember once writing about one of Monet's innumerable snow effects: "This picture is in his most radiant manner. A line of snow-enchanted architecture passes through the picture—only poor houses with a single square church tower, but they are beautiful as Greek temples in the supernatural whiteness of the great immaculate snow. Below the village, but not quite in the foreground, a few yellow bushes, bare and crippled by the frost, and around and above a marvellous glitter in pale blue and pale rose tints." I asked if the touch was not more precious than intimate; and I spoke, too, of a shallow and brilliant appearance. But if I had asked why the picture, notwithstanding its incontestable merits, was so much on the surface, why it so irresistibly suggested *un décor de théâtre*, why one did not enter into it as one does into a picture by Wilson or Corot, my criticism would have gone to the root of the evil. And the reason of this is because Monet has never known how to organise and control his values. The relation of a wall to the sky which he observes so finely seem as if deliberately contrived for the suppression of all atmosphere; and we miss

in Monet the delicacy and the mystery which are the charm of Corot. The bath of air being withdrawn, a landscape becomes a mosaic, flat surface takes the place of round: the next step is some form or other of pre-Raphaelitism.

MONET, SISLEY, PISSARO, AND THE DECADENCE.

NATURE demands that children should devour their parents, and Corot was hardly cold in his grave when his teaching came to be neglected and even denied. Values were abandoned and colour became the unique thought of the new school.

My first acquaintance with Monet's painting was made in '75 or '76—the year he exhibited his first steam-engine and his celebrated troop of life-size turkeys gobbling the tall grass in a meadow, at the end of which stood, high up in the picture, a French château. Impressionism is a word that has lent itself to every kind of misinterpretation, for in its exact sense all true painting is penetrated with impressionism, but, to use the word in its most modern sense—that is to say, to signify the rapid noting of illusive appearance—Monet is the only painter to whom it may be reasonably applied. I remember very well that sunlit meadow and the long coloured necks of the turkeys. Truly it may be said that, for the space of one rapid glance, the canvas radiates; it throws its light in the face of the spectator as, perhaps, no canvas did before. But if the eyes are not immediately averted the illusion passes, and its place is taken by a somewhat incoherent and crude coloration. Then the merits of the picture strike you

as having been obtained by excessive accomplishment in one-third of the handicraft and something like a formal protestation of the non-existence of the other two-thirds. Since that year I have seen Monets by the score, and have hardly observed any change or alteration in his manner of seeing or executing, or any development soever in his art. At the end of the season he comes up from the country with thirty or forty landscapes, all equally perfect, all painted in precisely the same way, and no one shows the slightest sign of hesitation, and no one suggests the unattainable, the beyond; one and all reveal to us a man who is always sure of his effect, and who is always in a hurry. Any corner of nature will do equally well for his purpose, nor is he disposed to change the disposition of any line of tree or river or hill; so long as a certain reverberation of colour is obtained all is well. An unceasing production, and an almost unvarying degree of excellence, has placed Monet at the head of the school; his pictures command high prices, and nothing goes now with the erudite American but Monet's landscapes. But does Monet merit this excessive patronage, and if so, what are the qualities in his work that make it superior to Sisley's and Pissaro's?

Sisley is less decorative, less on the surface, and though he follows Monet in his pursuit of colour, nature is, perhaps, on account of his English origin, something more to him than a brilliant appearance. It has of course happened to Monet to set his easel before the suburban aspect that Sisley loves, but he has always treated it rather in the decorative than in

the meditative spirit. He has never been touched by the humility of a lane's end, and the sentiment of the humble life that collects there has never appeared on his canvas. Yet Sisley, being more in sympathy with such nature, has often been able to produce a superior though much less pretentious picture than the ordinary stereotyped Monet. But if Sisley is more meditative than Monet, Pissaro is more meditative than either.

Monet had arrived at his style before I saw anything of his work; of his earlier canvases I know nothing. Possibly he once painted in the Corot manner; it is hardly possible that he should not have done so. However this may be, Pissaro did not rid himself for many years of the influence of Corot. His earliest pictures were all composed in pensive greys and violets, and exhaled the weary sadness of tilth and grange and scant orchard trees. The pale road winds through meagre uplands, and through the blown and gnarled and shiftless fruit-trees the saddening silhouette of the town drifts across the land. The violet spaces between the houses are the very saddest, and the spare furrows are patiently drawn, and so the execution is in harmony with and accentuates the unutterable monotony of the peasant's lot. The sky, too, is vague and empty, and out of its deathlike, creamy hollow the first shadows are blown into the pallid face of a void evening. The picture tells of the melancholy of ordinary life, of our poor transitory tenements, our miserable scrapings among the little mildew that has gathered on the surface of an insignificant planet.

I will not attempt to explain why the grey-toned and meditative Pissaro should have consented to countenance — I cannot say to lead (for, unlike every other *chef d'école*, Pissaro imitated the disciples instead of the disciples imitating Pissaro)— the many fantastic revolutions in pictorial art which have agitated Montmartre during the last dozen years. The Pissaro psychology I must leave to take care of itself, confining myself strictly to the narrative of these revolutions.

Authority for the broken brushwork of Monet is to be found in Manet's last pictures, and I remember Manet's reply when I questioned him about the pure violet shadows which, just before his death, he was beginning to introduce into his pictures. "One year one paints violet and people scream, and the following year every one paints a great deal more violet." If Manet's answer throws no light whatever on the new principle, it shows very clearly the direction, if not the goal, towards which his last style was moving. But perhaps I am speaking too cautiously, for surely broken brushwork and violet shadows lead only to one possible goal—the prismatic colours.

Manet died, and this side—and this side only—of his art was taken up by Monet, Sisley, and Renoir. Or was it that Manet had begun to yield to an influence—that of Monet, Sisley, and Renoir—which was just beginning to make itself felt? Be this as it may, browns and blacks disappeared from the palettes of those who did not wish to be considered *l'école des beaux-arts, et en plein.* Venetian reds, siennas, and ochres were in process of abandonment, and the

palette came to be composed very much in the following fashion: violet, white, blue, white, green, white, red, white, yellow, white, orange, white—the three primary and the three secondary colours, with white placed between each, so as to keep everything as distinct as possible, and avoid in the mixing all soiling of the tones. Monet, Sisley, and Renoir contented themselves with the abolition of all blacks and browns, for they were but half-hearted reformers, and it was clearly the duty of those who came after to rid the palette of all ochres, siennas, Venetian, Indian, and light reds. The only red and yellow that any one who was not, according to the expression of the new generation, *presque du Louvre*, could think of permitting on his palette were vermilion and cadmium. The first of this new generation was Seurat, Seurat begot Signac, Signac begot Anquetin, and Anquetin has begotten quite a galaxy of lesser lights, of whom I shall not speak in this article—of whom it is not probable that I shall ever speak.

It was in an exhibition held in Rue Lafitte in '81 or '82 that the new method, which comprised two most radical reforms—an execution achieved entirely with the point of the brush and the division of the tones—was proclaimed. Or should I say reformation, for the execution by a series of dots is implicit in the theory of the division of the tones? How well I remember being attracted towards an end of the room, which was filled with a series of most singular pictures. There must have been at least ten pictures of yachts in full sail. They were all drawn in profile, they were all painted in the very clearest

tints, white skies and white sails hardly relieved or explained with shadow, and executed in a series of minute touches, like mosaic. Ten pictures of yachts all in profile, all in full sail, all unrelieved by any attempt at atmospheric effect, all painted in a series of little dots!

Great as was my wonderment, it was tenfold increased on discovering that only five of these pictures were painted by the new man, Seurat, whose name was unknown to me; the other five were painted by my old friend Pissaro. My first thought went for the printer; my second for some *fumisterie* on the part of the hanging committee, the intention of which escaped me. The pictures were hung low, so I went down on my knees and examined the dotting in the pictures signed Seurat, and the dotting in those that were signed Pissaro. After a strict examination I was able to detect some differences, and I began to recognise the well-known touch even through this most wild and most wonderful transformation. Yes, owing to a long and intimate acquaintance with Pissaro and his work, I could distinguish between him and Seurat, but to the ordinary visitor their pictures were identical.

Many claims are put forward, but the best founded is that of Seurat; and, so far as my testimony may serve his greater honour and glory, I do solemnly declare that I believe him to have been the original discoverer of the division of the tones.

A tone is a combination of colours. In Nature colours are separate; they act and react one on the other, and so create in the eye the illusion of a

mixture of various colours—in other words, of a tone. But if the human eye can perform this prodigy when looking on colour as evolved through the spectacle of the world, why should not the eye be able to perform the same prodigy when looking on colour as displayed over the surface of a canvas? Nature does not mix her colours to produce a tone; and the reason of the marked discrepancy existing between Nature and the Louvre is owing to the fact that painters have hitherto deemed it a necessity to prepare a tone on the palette before placing it on the canvas; whereas it is quite clear that the only logical and reasonable method is to first complete the analysis of the tone, and then to place the colours which compose the tone in dots over the canvas, varying the size of the dots and the distance between the dots according to the depth of colour desired by the painter.

If this be done truly—that is to say, if the first analysis of the tones be a correct analysis—and if the spectator places himself at the right distance from the picture, there will happen in his eyes exactly the same blending of colour as happens in them when they are looking upon Nature. An example will, I think, make my meaning clear. We are in a club smoking-room. The walls are a rich ochre. Three or four men sit between us and the wall, and the blue smoke of their cigars fills the middle air. In painting this scene it would be usual to prepare the tone on the palette, and the preparation would be somewhat after this fashion: ochre warmed with a little red—a pale violet tinted with lake for the smoke of the cigars.

But such a method of painting would seem to Seurat and Signac to be artless, primitive, unscientific, childish, *presque du Louvre*—above all, unscientific. They would say, "Decompose the tone. That tone is composed of yellow, white, and violet turning towards lake;" and, having satisfied themselves in what proportions, they would dot their canvases over with pure yellow and pure white, the interspaces being filled in with touches of lake and violet, numerous where the smoke is thickest, diminishing in number where the wreaths vanish into air. Or let us suppose that it is a blue slated roof that the dottist wishes to paint. He first looks behind him, to see what is the colour of the sky. It is an orange sky. He therefore represents the slates by means of blue dots intermixed with orange and white dots, and—ah! I am forgetting an important principle in the new method—the complementary colour which the eye imagines, but does not see. What is the complementary colour of blue, grey, and orange? Green. Therefore green must be introduced into the roof; otherwise the harmony would be incomplete, and therefore in a measure discordant.

Needless to say that a sky painted in this way does not bear looking into. Close to the spectator it presents the appearance of a pard; but when he reaches the proper distance there is no denying that the colours do in a measure unite and assume a tone more or less equivalent to the tone that would have been obtained by blending the colours on the palette. "But," cry Seurat and Signac, "an infinitely purer and more beautiful tone than could have been obtained by

any artificial blending of the colours on the palette —a tone that is the exact equivalent of one of Nature's tones, for it has been obtained in exactly the same way."

Truly a subject difficult to write about in English. Perhaps it is one that should not be attempted anywhere except in a studio with closed doors. But if I did not make some attempt to explain this matter, I should leave my tale of the decline and fall of French art in the nineteenth century incomplete.

Roughly speaking, these new schools—the symbolists, the decadents, the dividers of tones, the professors of the rhythm of gesture—date back about ten years. For ten years the division of the tones has been the subject of discussion in the æsthetic circles of Montmartre. And when we penetrate further into the matter—or, to be more exact, as we ascend into the higher regions of *La Butte*—we find the elect, who form so stout a phalanx against the philistinism of the Louvre, themselves subdivided into numerous sections, and distraught with internecine feuds concerning the principle of the art which they pursue with all the vehemence that Veronese green and cadmium yellow are capable of. From ten at night till two in the morning the *brasseries* of the Butte are in session. Ah! the interminable bocks and the reek of the cigars, until at last a hesitating exodus begins. An exhausted proprietor at the head of his waiters, crazed with sleepiness, eventually succeeds in driving these noctambulist apostles into the streets.

Then the nervous lingering at the corner! The

disputants, anxious and yet loth to part, say good-bye, each regretting that he had not urged some fresh argument—an argument which had just occurred to him, and which, he feels sure, would have reduced his opponent to impotent silence. Sometimes the partings are stormy. The question of the introduction of the complementary colours into the frames of the pictures is always a matter of strife, and results in much nonconformity. Several are strongly in favour of carrying the complementary colours into the picture-frames. "If you admit," says one, "that to paint a blue roof with an orange sky shining on it you must introduce the complementary colour green—which the spectator does not see, but imagines—there is excellent reason why you should dot the frame all over with green, for the picture and its frame are not two things, but one thing." "But," cries his opponent, "there is a finality in all things; if you carry your principle out to the bitter end, the walls as well as the frame should be dotted with the complementary colours, the staircases too, the streets likewise; and if we pursue the complementaries into the street, who shall say where we are to stop? Why stop at all, unless the neighbours protest that we are interfering with their complementaries?"

The schools headed by Signac and Anquetin comprise numerous disciples and adherents. They do not exhibit in the Salon or in the Champ de Mars; but that is because they disdain to do so. They hold exhibitions of their own, and their picture-dealers trade only in their works and in those belonging to or legitimately connected with the new schools.

If I have succeeded in explaining the principle of coloration employed by these painters, I must have excited some curiosity in the reader to see these scientifically-painted pictures. To say that they are strange, absurd, ridiculous, conveys no sensation of their extravagances; and I think that even an elaborate description would miss its mark. For, in truth, the pictures merit no such attention. It is only needful to tell the reader that they fail most conspicuously at the very point where it was their mission to succeed. Instead of excelling in brilliancy of colour the pictures painted in the ordinary way, they present the most complete spectacle of discoloration possible to imagine.

Yet Signac is a man of talent, and in an exhibition of pictures which I visited last May I saw a wide bay, two rocky headlands extending far into the sea, and this offing was filled with a multitude of gull-like sails. There was in it a vibration of light, such an effect as a mosaic composed of dim-coloured but highly polished stones might produce. I can say no good word, however, for his portrait of a gentleman holding his hat in one hand and a flower in the other. This picture formulated a still newer æstheticism—the rhythm of gesture. For, according to Signac, the raising of the face and hands expresses joy, the depression of the face and hands denotes sadness. Therefore, to denote the melancholy temperament of his sitter, Signac represented him as being hardly able to lift his hat to his head or the flower to his button-hole. The figure was painted, as usual, in dots of pure colour lifted from the palette

with the point of the brush; the complementary colours in duplicate bands curled up the background. This was considered by the disciples to be an important innovation; and the effect, it is needless to say, was gaudy, if not neat.

A theory of Anquetin's is that wherever the painter is painting, his retina must still hold some sensation of the place he has left; therefore there is in every scene not only the scene itself, but remembrance of the scene that preceded it. This is not quite clear, is it? No. But I think I can make it clear. He who walks out of a brilliantly lighted saloon—that is to say, he who walks out of yellow—sees the other two primary colours, red and blue; in other words, he sees violet. Therefore Anquetin paints the street, and everything in it, violet—boots, trousers, hats, coats, lamp-posts, paving-stones, and the tail of the cat disappearing under the *porte cochère.*

But if in my description of these schools I have conveyed the idea of stupidity or ignorance I have failed egregiously. These young men are all highly intelligent and keenly alive to art, and their doings are not more vain than the hundred and one artistic notions which have been undermining the art-sense of the French and English nations for the last twenty years. What I have described is not more foolish than the stippling at South Kensington or the drawing by the masses at Julien's. The theory of the division of the tones is no more foolish than the theory of *plein air* or the theory of the square brushwork; it is as foolish, but not a jot more foolish.

Great art dreams, imagines, sees, feels, expresses —reasons never. It is only in times of woful decadence, like the present, that the bleating of the schools begins to be heard; and although, to the ignorant, one method may seem less ridiculous than another, all methods—I mean, all methods that are not part and parcel of the pictorial intuition—are equally puerile and ridiculous. The separation of the method of expression from the idea to be expressed is the sure sign of decadence. France is now all decadence. In the Champ de Mars, as in the Salon, the man of the hour is he who has invented the last trick in subject or treatment.

France has produced great artists in quick succession. Think of all the great names, beginning with Ingres and ending with Degas, and wonder if you can that France has at last entered on a period of artistic decadence. For the last sixty years the work done in literary and pictorial art has been immense; the soil has been worked along and across, in every direction; and for many a year nothing will come to us from France but the bleat of the scholiast.

OUR ACADEMICIANS.

THAT nearly all artists dislike and despise the Royal Academy is a matter of common knowledge. Whether with reason or without is a matter of opinion, but the existence of an immense fund of hate and contempt of the Academy is not denied. From Glasgow to Cornwall, wherever a group of artists collects, there hangs a gathering and a darkening sky of hate. True, the position of the Academy seems to be impregnable; and even if these clouds should break into storm the Academy would be as little affected as the rock of Gibraltar by squall or tempest. The Academy has successfully resisted a Royal Commission, and a crusade led by Mr. Holman Hunt in the columns of the *Times* did not succeed in obtaining the slightest measure of reform. . . . Here I might consult Blue-books and official documents, and tell the history of the Academy; but for the purpose of this article the elementary facts in every one's possession are all that are necessary. We know that we owe the Academy to the artistic instincts of George III. It was he who sheltered it in Somerset House, and when Somerset House was turned into public offices, the Academy was bidden to Trafalgar Square; and when circumstances again compelled the authorities to ask the Academy to move on, the Academy, posing as a

public body, demanded a site, and the Academy was given one worth three hundred thousand pounds. Thereon the Academy erected its present buildings, and when they were completed the Academy declared itself on the first opportunity to be no public body at all, but a private enterprise. Then why the site, and why the Royal charter? Mr. Colman, Mr. Pears, Mr. Reckitt are not given sites worth three hundred thousand pounds. These questions have often been asked, and to them the Academy has always an excellent answer. "The site has been granted, and we have erected buildings upon it worth a hundred thousand pounds; get rid of us you cannot."

The position of the Academy is as impregnable as the rock of Gibraltar; it is as well advertised as the throne itself, and the income derived from the sale of the catalogues alone is enormous. Then the Academy has the handling of the Chantrey Bequest Funds, which it does not fail to turn to its own advantage by buying pictures of Academicians, which do not sell in the open market, at extravagant prices, or purchasing pictures by future Academicians, and so fostering, strengthening, and imposing on the public the standard of art which obtains in Academic circles. Such, in a few brief words, is the institution which controls and in a large measure directs the art of this country. But though I come with no project to obtain its dissolution, it seems to me interesting to consider the causes of the hatred of the Academy with which artistic England is saturated, oftentimes convulsed; and it may be well to ask if any institution, however impregnable, can continue to defy public opinion, if

any sovereignty, however fortified by wealth and buttressed by prescription, can continue to ignore and outrage the opinions of its subjects?

The hatred of artistic England for the Academy proceeds from the knowledge that the Academy is no true centre of art, but a mere commercial enterprise protected and subventioned by Government. In recent years every shred of disguise has been cast off, and it has become patent to every one that the Academy is conducted on as purely commercial principles as any shop in the Tottenham Court Road. For it is impossible to suppose that Mr. Orchardson and Mr. Watts do not know that Mr. Leader's landscapes are like tea-trays, that Mr. Dicksee's figures are like bon-bon boxes, and that Mr. Herkomer's portraits are like German cigars. But apparently the R.A.s are merely concerned to follow the market, and they elect the men whose pictures sell best in the City. City men buy the productions of Mr. Herkomer, Mr. Dicksee, Mr. Leader, and Mr. Goodall. Little harm would be done to art if the money thus expended meant no more than filling stockbrokers' drawing-rooms with bad pictures, but the uncontrolled exercise of the stockbroker's taste in art means the election of a vast number of painters to the Academy, and election to the Academy means certain affixes, R.A. and A., and these signs are meant to direct opinion.

For when the ordinary visitor thinks a picture very bad, and finds R.A. or A. after the painter's name, he concludes that he must be mistaken, and so a false standard of art is created in the public mind. But though Mr. Orchardson, Sir John Millais, Sir Frederick

Leighton, and Mr. Watts have voted for the City merchants' nominees, it would be a mistake to suppose that they did not know for whom they should have voted. It is to be questioned if there be an R.A. now alive who would dare to deny that Mr. Whistler is a very great painter. It was easy to say he was not in the old days when, under the protection of Mr. Ruskin, the R.A.s went in a body and gave evidence against him. But now even Mr. Jones, R.A., would not venture to repeat the opinion he expressed about one of the most beautiful of the nocturnes. Time, it is true, has silenced the foolish mouth of the R.A., but time has not otherwise altered him; and there is as little chance to-day as there was twenty years ago of Mr. Whistler being elected an Academician.

No difference exists even in Academic circles as to the merits of Mr. Albert Moore's work. Many Academicians will freely acknowledge that his non-election is a very grave scandal; they will tell you that they have done everything to get him elected, and have given up the task in despair. Mr. Whistler and Mr. Albert Moore, the two greatest artists living in England, will never be elected Academicians; and artistic England is asked to acquiesce in this grave scandal, and also in many minor scandals: the election of Mr. Dicksee in place of Mr. Henry Moore, and Mr. Stanhope Forbes in place of Mr. Swan or Mr. John Sargent! No one thinks Mr. Dicksee as capable an artist as Mr. Henry Moore, and no one thinks Mr. Stanhope Forbes as great an artist as Mr. Swan or Mr. Sargent. Then why were they elected? Because the men who represent most emphatically the taste of the City

have become so numerous of late years in the Academy that they are able to keep out any one whose genius would throw a doubt on the commonplace ideal which they are interested in upholding. Mr. Alma Tadema would not care to confer such a mark of esteem as the affix R.A. on any painter practising an art which, when understood, would involve hatred of the copyplate antiquity which he supplies to the public.

This explanation seems incredible, I admit, but no other explanation is possible, for I repeat that the Academicians do not themselves deny the genius of the men they have chosen to ignore. So we find the Academy as a body working on exactly the same lines as the individual R.A., whose one ambition is to extend his connection, please his customers, and frustrate competition; and just as the capacity of the individual R.A. declines when the incentive is money, so does the corporate body lose its strength, and its hold on the art instincts of the nation relaxes when its aim becomes merely mercenary enterprise.

If Sir John Millais, Sir Frederick Leighton, Mr. Orchardson, Mr. Hook, and Mr. Watts were to die tomorrow, their places could be filled by men who are not and never will be in the Academy; but among the Associates there is no name that does not suggest a long decline: Mr. Macbeth, Mr. Leader, Mr. David Murray, Mr. Stanhope Forbes, Mr. J. MacWhirter. And are the coming Associates Mr. Hacker, Mr. Shannon, Mr. Solomon, Mr. Alfred East, Mr. Bramley? Mr. Swan has been passed over so many times that his election is beginning to seem doubtful. For very shame's

sake the elder Academicians may bring their influence and insist on his election; but the City merchants' nominees are very strong, and will not have him if they can help it. They may yield to Mr. Swan, but no single inch further will it be possible to get them to go. Mr. Mouat Loudan, Mr. Lavery, Mr. Mark Fisher, and Mr. Peppercorn have no chance soever. Mr. Mouat Loudan, was rejected this year. Mr. Lavery's charming portrait of Lord McLaren's daughters was still more shamefully treated; it was "skied." Mr. Mark Fisher, most certainly our greatest living landscape-painter, had his picture refused; and Mr. Reid, a man who has received medals in every capital in Europe, has had his principal picture hung just under the ceiling.

On varnishing-day Mr. Reid challenged Mr. Dicksee to give a reason for this disgraceful hanging; he defied him to say that he thought the pictures underneath were better pictures; and it is as impossible for me as it was for Mr. Dicksee to deny that Mr. Reid's picture is the best picture in Room 6. Mr. Peppercorn, another well-known artist, had his picture rejected. It is now hanging in the Goupil Galleries. I do not put it forward as a masterpiece, but I do say that it deserved a place in any exhibition, and if I had a friend on the Hanging Committee I would ask him to point to the landscapes on the Academy walls which he considers better than Mr. Peppercorn's.

Often a reactionary says, "Name the good pictures that have been rejected; where can I see them? I want to see these masterpieces," etc. The reactionary

has generally the best of the argument. It is difficult to name the pictures that have been refused; they are the unknown quantity. Moreover, the pictures that are usually refused are tentative efforts, and not mature work. But this year the opponents of the Academy are able to cite some very substantial facts in support of their position, a portrait by our most promising portrait-painter and a landscape by the best landscape-painter alive in England having been rejected. The picture of the farm-yard which Mr. Fisher exhibited at the New English Art Club last autumn would not be out of place in the National Gallery. I do not say that the rejected picture is as good—I have not seen the rejected picture—but I do say that Mr. Fisher could not paint as badly as nine-tenths of the landscapes hanging in the Academy if he tried.

The Academy is sinking steadily; never was it lower than this year; next year a few fine works may crop up, but they will be accidents, and will not affect the general tendency of the exhibitions nor the direction in which the Academy is striving to lead English art. Under the guidanceship of the Academy English art has lost all that charming naïveté and simplicity which was so long its distinguishing mark. At an Academy banquet, anything but the most genial optimism would be out of place, and yet Sir Frederick Leighton could not but allude to the disintegrating influence of French art. True, in the second part of the sentence he assured his listeners that the danger was more imaginary than real, and he hoped that with wider knowledge, etc. But if no danger need be

apprehended, why did Sir Frederick trouble to raise the question? And if he apprehended danger and would save us from it, why did he choose to ask his friend M. Bouguereau to exhibit at the Academy?

The allusion in Sir Frederick's speech to French methods, and the exhibition of a picture by M. Bouguereau in the Academy, is strangely significant. For is not M. Bouguereau the chief exponent of the art which Sir Frederick ventures to suggest may prove a disintegrating influence in our art?—has proven would be a more correct phrase. Let him who doubts compare the work of almost any of the elder Academicians with the work of those who practise the square brushwork of the French school. Compare, for instance, Sir Frederick's "Garden of the Hesperides" with Mr. Solomon's "Orpheus," and then you will appreciate the gulf that separates the elder Academicians from the men already chosen and marked out for future Academicians. And him whom this illustration does not convince I will ask to compare Mr. Hacker's "Annunciation" with any picture by Mr. Frith, or Mr. Faed, I will even go so far as to say with any work by Mr. Sidney Cooper, an octogenarian, now nearer his ninetieth than his eightieth year.

It would have been better if Sir Frederick had told the truth boldly at the Academy banquet. He knows that a hundred years will hardly suffice to repair the mischief done by this detestable French painting, this mechanical drawing and modelling, built up systematically, and into which nothing of the artist's sensibility may enter. Sir Frederick hinted

the truth, and I do not think it will displease him that I should say boldly what he was minded but did not dare to say. The high position he occupies did not allow him to go further than he did; the society of which he is president is now irreparably committed to Anglo-French art, and has, by every recent election, bound itself to uphold and impose this false and foreign art upon the nation.

Out of the vast array of portraits and subject-pictures painted in various styles and illustrating every degree of ignorance, stupidity, and false education, one thing really comes home to the careful observer, and that is, the steady obliteration of all English feeling and mode of thought. The younger men practise an art purged of all nationality. England lingers in the elder painters, and though the representation is often inadequate, the English pictures are pleasanter than the mechanical art which has spread from Paris all over Europe, blotting out in its progress all artistic expression of racial instincts and mental characteristics. Nothing, for instance, can be more primitive, more infantile in execution, than Mr. Leslie's "Rose Queen." But it seems to me superficial criticism to pull it to pieces, for after all it suggests a pleasant scene, a stairway full of girls in white muslin; and who does not like pretty girls dressed in white muslin? And Mr. Leslie spares us the boredom of odious and sterile French pedantry.

Mr. Waterhouse's picture of "Circe Poisoning the Sea" is an excellent example of professional French painting. The drawing is planned out geo-

metrically, the modelling is built up mechanically. The brush, filled with thick paint, works like a trowel. In the hands of the Dutch and Flemish artists the brush was in direct communication with the brain, and moved slowly or rapidly, changing from the broadest and most emphatic stroke to the most delicate and fluent touch according to the nature of the work. But here all is square and heavy. The colour scheme, the blue dress and the green water—how theatrical, how its richness reeks of the French studio! How cosmopolitan and pedantic is this would-be romantic work!

But can we credit Mr. Dicksee with any artistic intention in the picture he calls "Leila," hanging in the next room? I think not. Mr. Dicksee probably thought that having painted what the critics would call "somewhat sad subjects" last year, it would be well if he painted something distinctly gay this year. A girl in a harem struck him as a subject that would please every one, especially if he gave her a pretty face, a pretty dress, and posed her in a graceful attitude. A nice bright crimson was just the colour for the dress, the feet he might leave bare, and it would be well to draw them from the plaster cast—a pair of pretty feet would be sure to find favour with the populace. It is impossible to believe that Mr. Dicksee was moved by any deeper thought or impression when he painted this picture. The execution is not quite so childlike and bland as Mr. Leslie's; it is heavier and more stodgy. One is a cane chair from the Tottenham Court Road, the other is a dining-room chair from the Tottenham Court Road. In neither

does any trace of French influence appear, and both painters are City-elected Academicians.

A sudden thought. . . . Leader, Fildes, David Murray, Peter Graham, Herkomer. . . . Then it is not the City that favours the French school, but the Academy itself! And this shows how widely tastes may differ, yet remain equally sundered from good taste. I believe the north and the south poles are equidistant from the equator. Looking at Sir Frederick Leighton's picture, entitled "At the Fountain," I am forced to admit that, regarded as mere execution, it is quite as intolerably bad as Mr. Dicksee's "Leila." And yet it is not so bad a picture, because Sir Frederick's mind is a higher and better-educated mind than Mr. Dicksee's; and therefore, however his hand may fail him, there remains a certain habit of thought which always, even when worn and frayed, preserves something of its original aristocracy. "The Sea giving up its Dead" is an unpleasant memory of Michael Angelo. But in "The Garden of the Hesperides" Sir Frederick is himself, and nothing but himself. And the picture is so incontestably the work of an artist that I cannot bring myself to inquire too closely into its shortcomings. The merit of the picture is in the arabesque, which is charming and original. The maidens are not dancing, but sitting round their tree. On the right there is an olive, in the middle the usual strawberry-cream, and on the left a purple drapery. The brown water in the foreground balances the white sky most happily, and the faces of the women recall our best recollections of Sir Frederick's work. In

the next room—Room 3—Mr. Watts exhibits a very incoherent work entitled "She shall be called Woman."

The subject on which all of us are most nearly agreed—painters' critics and the general public—is the very great talent of Mr. G. F. Watts. Even the Chelsea studios unite in praising him. But were we ever sincere in our praise of him as we are sincere in our praise of Degas, Whistler, and Manet? And lately have we not begun to suspect our praise to-day is a mere clinging to youthful admirations which have no root in our present knowledge and æstheticisms? Perhaps the time has come to say what we do really think of Mr. Watts. We think that his very earliest pictures show, occasionally, the hand of a painter; but for the last thirty years Mr. Watts seems to have been undergoing transformation, and we see him now as a sort of cross between an alchemist of old time and a book collector—his left hand fumbling among the reds and blues of the old masters, his right turning the pages of a dusty folio in search of texts for illustration; a sort of a modern Veronese in treacle and gingerbread. To judge him by what he exhibits this year would not be just. We will select for criticism the celebrated portrait of Mrs. Percy Wyndham—in which he has obviously tried to realise all his artistic ideals.

The first thing that strikes me on looking on this picture is the too obvious intention of the painter to invent something that could not go out of fashion. On sitting down to paint this picture the painter's

mind seems to have been disturbed with all sorts of undetermined notions concerning the eternal Beautiful, and the formula discovered by the Venetian for its complete presentation. "The Venetians gave us the eternal Beautiful as civilisation presents it. Why not select in modern life all that corresponds to the Venetian formulæ; why not profit by their experience in the selection I am called upon to make?"

So do I imagine the painter's desire, and certainly the picture is from end to end its manifestation. Laurel leaves form a background for the head, and a large flower-vase is in the right-hand corner, and a balustrade is on the right; and this Anglo-Venetian lady is attired in a rich robe, brown, with green shades, and heavily embroidered; her elbow is leaned on a pedestal in a manner that shows off the plenitudes of the forearm, and for pensive dignity the hand is raised to the face. It is a noble portrait, and tells the story of a lifelong devotion to art, and yet it is difficult to escape from the suspicion that we are not very much interested, and that we find its compound beauty a little insipid. In avoiding the fashion of his day Mr. Watts seems to me to have slipped into an abstraction. The mere leaving out every accent that marks a dress as belonging to a particular epoch does not save it from going out of fashion. It is in the execution that the great artists annihilated the whim of temporary taste, and made the hoops of old time beautiful, however slim the season's fashions. To be of all time the artist must begin by being of his own time; and if he would

find the eternal type he must seek it in his own parish.

The painters of old Venice were entirely concerned with *l'idée plastique*, but on this point the art of Mr. Watts is a repudiation of the art of his masters. Abstract conceptions have been this long while a constant source of pollution in his work. Here, even in his treatment of the complexion, he seems to have been impelled by some abstract conception rather than by a pictorial sense of harmony and contrast, and partly for this reason his synthesis is not beautiful, like the conventional silver-grey which Velasquez used so often, or the gold-brown skins of Titian's women. The hand tells what was passing in the mind, and seeing that ugly shadow which marks the nose I know that the painter was not then engaged with the joy of purely material creation; had he been he could not have rested satisfied with so ugly a statement of a beautiful fact. And the forehead, too, where it comes into light, where it turns into shadow; the cheek, too, with its jaw-bone, and the evasive modelling under and below the eyes, are summarily rendered, and we think perforce of the supple, flowing modelling, so illusive, apparent only in the result, with which Titian would have achieved that face. Manet, an incomplete Hals, might have failed to join the planes, and in his frankness left out what he had not sufficiently observed; but he would have compensated us with a beautiful tone.

For an illustration of Mr. Watts' drawing we will take the picture of "Love and Death," perhaps the

most pictorially significant of all Mr. Watts' designs. The enormous figure of Death advances impressively with right arm raised to force the door which a terrified Love would keep closed against him. The figure of Death is draped in grey, the colour that Mr. Watts is most in sympathy with and manages best. But the upper portion of the figure is vast, and the construction beneath the robe too little understood for it not to lack interest; and in the raised arm and hand laid against the door, where power and delicacy of line were indispensable for the pictorial beauty of the picture, we are vouchsafed no more than a rough statement of rudimentary fact. Love is thrown back against the door, his right arm raised, his right leg advanced in action of resistance to the intruder. The movement is well conceived, and we regret that so summary a line should have been thought sufficient expression. Any one who has ever held a pencil in a school of art knows how a young body, from armpit to ankle-bone, flows with lovely line. Any one who has been to the Louvre knows the passion with which Ingres would follow this line, simplifying it and drawing it closer until it surpassed all melody. But in Mr. Watts' picture the boy's natural beauty is lost in a coarse and rough planing out that tells of an eye that saw vaguely and that wearied, and in an execution full of uncertain touch and painful effort. Unless the painter is especially endowed with the instinct of anatomies, the sentiment of proportion, and a passion for form, the nude is a will-o'-the-wisp, whose way leads where he may not follow No one suspects Mr. Watts of

one of these qualifications; he appears even to think them of but slight value, and his quest of the allegorical seems to be merely motived by an unfortunate desire to philosophise.

As a colourist Mr. Watts is held in high esteem, and it is as a colourist that his admirers consider his claim to the future to be best founded. Beautiful passages of colour are frequently to be met with in his work, and yet it would be difficult to say what colour except grey he has shown any mastery over. A painter may paint with an exceedingly reduced palette, like Chardin, and yet be an exquisite colourist. To colour well does not consist in the employment of bright colours, but in the power of carrying the dominant note of colour through the entire picture, through the shadows as well as the half-tints, and Chardin's grey we find everywhere, in the bloom of a peach as well as in a decanter of rich wine; and how tender and persuasive it is! Mr. Watts' grey would seem coarse, common, uninteresting beside it. Reds and blues and yellows do not disappear from Mr. Watts' palette as they do from Rembrandt's; they are there, but they are usually so dirtied that they appear like a monochrome. Can we point to any such fresh, beautiful red as the scarf that the "Princesse des Pays de la Porcelaine" wears about that grey which would have broken Chardin's heart with envy? Can we point to any blue in Mr. Watts' as fresh and as beautiful as the blue carpet under the Princess's feet?

With what Mr. Watts paints it is impossible to say. On one side an unpleasant reddish brown, scrubbed

till it looks like a mud-washed rock; on the other a crumbling grey, like the rind of a Stilton cheese. The nude figure in the reeds—the picture purchased for the Chantrey Fund collection—will serve for illustration. It is clearly the work of a man with something incontestably great in his soul, but why should so beautiful a material as oil paint be transformed into a crumbly substance like—I can think of nothing else but the rind of a Stilton cheese. Mr. Watts and Mr. Burne-Jones seem to have convinced themselves that imaginative work can only be expressed in wool-work and gum. A strange theory, for which I find no authority, even if I extend my inquiry as far back as Mantegna and Botticelli. True, that the method of these painters is archaic, the lights are narrowed, and the shadows broadened; nevertheless, their handling of oil colour is nearer to Titian's than either Mr. Watts' or Mr. Burne-Jones'.

It is one of the platitudes of art criticism to call attention to the length of the necks of Rossetti's women, and thereby to infer that the painter could not draw. True, Rossetti was not a skilful draughtsman, but not because the necks of his women are too long. The relation between good drawing and measurement is slight. The first quality in drawing, without which drawing does not exist, is an individual seeing of the object. This Rossetti most certainly had; there his draughtsmanship began and ended. But the question lies rather with handling than with drawing, and Rossetti sometimes handled paint very skilfully. The face and hair of the half-length Venus surrounded with roses is excel-

lent in quality; the roses and the honeysuckle are quite beautiful in quality; they are fresh and bright, pure in colour, as if they had just come from the garden. The "Annunciation" in the National Gallery is a little sandy, but it cannot be said to be bad in quality, as Mr. Watts' and Mr. Jones' pictures are bad. Every Rossetti is at least clearly recognisable as an oil painting.

In the same room there is Mr. Orchardson's picture of "Napoleon dictating the Account of his Campaigns." I gather from my notes the trace of the disappointment that this picture caused me. "Two small figures in a large canvas. The secretary sits on the right at a small table. He looks up, his face turned towards Napoleon, who stands on the left in the middle of the picture, looking down, studying the maps with which the floor is strewn. A great simplicity in the surroundings, and all the points of character insisted on, with the view of awakening the spectator's curiosity. From first to last a vicious desire to narrate an anecdote. It is strange that a man of Mr. Orchardson's talent should participate so fully in the supreme vice of modern art which believes a picture to be the same thing as a scene in a play. The whole picture conceived and executed in that pale yellow tint which seems to be the habitual colour of Mr. Orchardson's mind." A pity indeed it is that Mr. Orchardson should waste very real talent in narratives, for he is a great portrait painter. I remember very well that beautiful portrait of his wife and child, and will take this opportunity to recall it. It is the finest thing he has done; finer

than the portrait of Mr. Gilbey. Here, in a few words, is the subject of the picture. An old-fashioned cane sofa stretches right across the canvas. A lady in black is seated on the right; she bends forward, her left arm leaning over the back of the sofa; she holds in her hand a Japanese hand-screen. The fine and graceful English profile is modelled without vulgar roundness, *un beau modèle à plat;* and the black hair is heavy and loose, one lock slipping over the forehead. The painter has told the exact character of the hair as he has told the character of the hand, and the age of the hand and hair is evident. She is a woman of five-and-thirty, she is interested in her baby, her first baby, as a woman of that age would be. The baby lies on a woollen rug and cushion, just beneath the mother's eyes; the colour of both is a reddish yellow. He holds up his hands for the hand-screen that the mother waves about him. The strip of background about the yellow cane-work is grey-green; there is a vase of dried ferns and grasses on the left, and the whole picture is filled and penetrated with the affection and charm of English home-life, and without being disfigured with any touch of vulgar or commonplace sentimentality. The baby's face is somewhat hard; it is, perhaps, the least satisfactory thing in the picture. The picture is wanting in that totality which we find in the greatest masters—for instance, in that exquisite portrait of a mother and child by Sir Joshua Reynolds, exhibited this year in the Guildhall—that beautiful portrait of the mother holding out her babe at arms'-length above her knee.

Room 4 is remarkable for Stanhope Forbes' picture

of "Forging the Anchor." Mr. Stanhope Forbes is the last-elected Academician, and the most prominent exponent of the art of Bastien-Lepage. Perhaps the most instructive article that could be written on the Academy would be one in which the writer would confine his examination to this and Mr. Clausen's picture of "Mowers," comparing and contrasting the two pictures at every point, showing where they diverge, and tracing their artistic history back to its ultimate source. But to do this thoroughly would be to write the history of the artistic movement in France and England for the last thirty years; and I must limit myself to pointing out that Mr. Clausen has gone back to first principles, whereas Mr. Stanhope Forbes still continues at the point where Bastien-Lepage began to curtail, deform, and degrade the original inspiration. Mr. Clausen, I said, overcame the difficulty of the trousers by generalisation. Mr. Stanhope Forbes copied the trousers seam by seam, patch by patch; and the ugliness of the garment bores you in the picture, exactly as it would in nature. And the same criticism applies equally well to the faces, the hands, the leather aprons, the loose iron, the hammers, the pincers, the smoked walls. I should not be surprised to learn that Mr. Stanhope Forbes had had a forge built up in his studio, and had copied it all as it stood. A handful of dry facts instead of a passionate impression of life in its envelope of mystery and suggestion.

Realism, that is to say the desire to compete with nature, to be nature, is the disease from which art

has suffered most in the last twenty years. The disease is now at wane, and when we happen upon a canvas of the period like "Labourers after Dinner," we cry out, "What madness! were we ever as mad as that?" The impressionists have been often accused of a desire to dispense with the element of beauty, but the accusation has always seemed to me to be quite groundless; and even memory of a certain portrait by Mr. Walter Sickert does not cause me to falter in this opinion. Until I saw Mr. Clausen's "Labourers" I did not fully realise how terrible a thing art becomes when divorced from beauty, grace, mystery, and suggestion. It would be difficult to say where and how this picture differs from a photograph; it seems to me to be little more than the vices of photography magnified. Having spoken so plainly, it is necessary that I should explain myself.

The subject of this picture is a group of field labourers finishing their mid-day dinner in the shade of some trees. They are portrayed in a still even light, exactly as they were; the picture is one long explanation; it is as clear as a newspaper, and it reads like one. We can tell how many months that man in the foreground has worn those dreadful hobnailed boots; we can count the nails, and we notice that two or three are missing. Those disgusting corduroy trousers have hung about his legs for so many months; all the ugliness of these labourers' faces and the solid earthiness of their lives are there; nothing has been omitted, curtailed, or exaggerated. There is some psychology. We see that the years

have brought the old man cunning rather than wisdom. The middle-aged man and the middle-aged woman live in mute stupidity—they have known nothing but the daily hardship of living, and the vacuous face of their son tells how completely the life of his forefathers has descended upon him. Here there is neither the foolish gaiety of Teniers' peasants nor the vicious animality of Brouwers'; and it is hardly necessary to say that the painter has seen nothing of the legendary patriarchal beauty and solemnity which lends so holy a charm to Millet's Breton folk. Mr. Clausen has seen nothing but the sordid and the mean, and his execution in this picture is as sordid and as mean as his vision. There is not a noble gesture expressive of weariness nor an attitude expressive of resignation. Mr. Clausen seems to have said, "I will go lower than the others; I will seek my art in the mean and the meaningless." But notwithstanding his very real talent, Mr. Clausen has not found art where art is not, where art never has been found, where art never will be found.

Looking at this picture, the ordinary man will say, "If such ugliness as that exists, I don't want to see it. Why paint such subjects?" And at least the first part of this criticism seems to me to be quite incontrovertible. I can imagine no valid reason for the portrayal of so much ugliness; and, what is more important, I can find among the unquestioned masters no slightest precedent for the blank realism of this picture. The ordinary man's aversion to such ugliness seems to me to be entirely right, and I only

join issue with him when he says, "Why paint such subjects?" Why not? For all subjects contain elements of beauty; ugliness does not exist for the eye that sees beautifully, and meanness vanishes if the sensation is a noble one. Have not the very subjects which Mr. Clausen sees so meanly, and which he degrades below the level even of the photograph, been seen nobly, and have they not been rendered incomparably touching, even august, by—— Well, the whole world knows by whom. But it will be said that Mr. Clausen painted these people as he saw them. I dare say he did; but if he could not see these field-folk differently, he should have abstained from painting them.

The mission of art is not truth, but beauty; and I know of no great work—I will go even further, I know no even tolerable work—in literature or in painting in which the element of beauty does not inform the intention. Art is surely but a series of conventions which enable us to express our special sense of beauty—for beauty is everywhere, and abounds in subtle manifestations. Things ugly in themselves become beautiful by association; or perhaps I should say that they become picturesque. The slightest insistance in a line will redeem and make artistically interesting the ugliest face. Look at Degas' ballet-girls, and say if, artistically, they are not beautiful. I defy you to say that they are mean. Again, an alteration in the light and shade will create beautiful pictures among the meanest brick buildings that ever were run up by the jerry-builder. See the violet suburb stretching into

the golden sunset. How exquisite it has become! how full of suggestion and fairy tale! A picturesque shadow will redeem the squalor of the meanest garret, and the subdued light of the little kitchen where the red-petticoated housewife is sweeping must contrast so delicately with the white glare of the brick yard where the neighbour stands in parley, leaning against the doorpost, that the humble life of the place is transformed and poetised. This was the A B C of Dutch art; it was the Dutchmen who first found out that with the poetising aid of light and shade the meanest and most commonplace incidents of every-day life could be made the subjects of pictures.

There are no merits in painting except technical merits; and though my criticism of Mr. Clausen's picture may at first sight seem to be a literary criticism, it is in truth a strictly technical criticism. For Mr. Clausen has neglected the admirable lessons which our Dutch cousins taught us two hundred years ago; he has neglected to avail himself of those principles of chiaroscuro which they perfected, and which would have enabled him to redeem the grossness, the ugliness, the meanness inherent in his subject. I said that he had gone further, in abject realism, than a photograph. I do not think I have exaggerated. It is not probable that those peasants would look so ugly in a photograph as they do in his picture. For had they been photographed, the chances are that some shadow would have clothed, would have hid, something, and a chance gleam might have concentrated the attention on some particular spot. Nine

times out of ten the exposure of the plate would not have taken place in a moment of flat grey light.

But it is the theory of Mr. Clausen and his school that it is right and proper to take a six-foot canvas into the open, and paint the entire picture from Nature. But when the sun is shining, it is not possible to paint for more than an hour—an hour and a half at most. At the end of that time the shadows have moved so much that the effect is wholly different. But on a grey day it is possible to paint on the same picture for four or five hours. Hence the preference shown by this school for grey days. Then the whole subject is seen clearly, like a newspaper; and the artist, if he is a realist, copies every patch on the trousers, and does not omit to tell us how many nails have fallen from the great clay-stained boots. Pre-Raphaelitism is only possible among august and beautiful things, when the subjects of the pictures are Virgins and angels, and the accessories are marbles, agate columns, Persian carpets, gold enwoven robes and vestments, ivories, engraven metals, pearls, velvets and silks, and when the object of the painter is to convey a sensation of the beauty of these materials by the luxury and beauty of the workmanship. The common workaday world, with accessories of tin pots and pans, corduroy breeches and clay-pipes, can be only depicted by a series of ellipses through a mystery of light and shade.

Beauty of some sort there must be in a work of art, and the very conditions under which Mr. Clausen painted precluded any beauty from entering into his picture. But this year Mr. Clausen seems to have

shaken himself free from his early education, and he exhibits a picture, conceived in an entirely different spirit, in this Academy. Turning to my notes I find it thus described: "A small canvas containing three mowers in a flowering meadow. Two are mowing; the third, a little to the left, sharpens his scythe. The sky is deep and lowering—a sultry summer day, a little unpleasant in colour, but true. At the end of the meadow the trees gleam. The earth is wrapped in a hot mist, the result of the heat, and through it the sun sheds a somewhat diffused and oven-like heat. There are heavy clouds overhead, for the gleam that passes over the three white shirts is transitory and uncertain. The handling is woolly and unpleasant, but handling can be overlooked when a canvas exhales a deep sensation of life. The movement of mowing—I should have said movements, for the men mow differently; one is older than the other—is admirably expressed. And the principal figure, though placed in the immediate foreground, is in and not out of the atmosphere. The difficulty of the trousers has been overcome by generalisation; the garment has not been copied patch by patch. The distribution of light is admirable; nowhere does it escape from the frame. J. F. Millet has painted many a worse picture."

Mr. Solomon and Mr. Hacker have both turned to mythology for the subjects of their pictures. And the beautiful and touching legends of Orpheus, and the Annunciation, have been treated by them with the indifference of "our special artist," who places the firemen on the right, the pump on the left, and

the blazing house in the middle of the picture. These pictures are therefore typical of a great deal of historical painting of our time; and I speak of them because they give me an opportunity of pointing out that before deciding to treat a page of history or legend, the painter should come to conclusions with himself regarding the goal which he desires to obtain. There are but two.

Either the legend passes unperceived in pomp of colour and wealth of design, or the picture is a visible interpretation of the legend. The Venetians were able to disregard the legend, but in centuries less richly endowed with pictorial genius painters are inclined to support their failing art with the psychological interest their imaginations draw from it. But imaginative interpretation should not be confused with bald illustration. The Academicians cannot understand why, if we praise "Dante seeing Beatrice in a Dream," we should vilify Mr. Fildes' "Doctor." In both cases a story is told, in neither case is the execution excellent. Why then should one be a picture and the other no more than a bald illustration? The question is a vexed one, and the only conclusion that we can draw seems to be that sentimentality pollutes, the anecdote degrades, wit altogether ruins; only great thought may enter into art. Rossetti is a painter we admire, and we place him above Mr. Fildes, because his interpretations are more imaginative. We condone his lack of pictorial power, because he could think, and we appreciate his Annunciation—the "Ecce Ancilla Domini!" in the National Gallery, principally because he has looked deep into the legend, and revealed its true and human significance.

It is a small picture, about three feet by two, and is destitute of all technical accomplishment, or even habit. It is painted in white and blue, and the streak of red in the foreground, the red of a screen on which is embroidered the lily—emblem of purity—adds to the chill and coldness. Drawn up upon her white bed the Virgin crouches, silent with expectation, listening to the mystic dream that has come upon her in the dim hush of dawn. The large blue eyes gleam with some strange joy that is quickening in her. The mouth and chin tell no tale, but the eyes are deep pools of light, and mirror the soul that is on fire within. The red hair falls about her, a symbol of the soul. In the drawn-up knees, faintly outlined beneath the white sheet, the painter hints at her body's beauty. One arm is cast forward, the hand not clenched but stricken. Behind her a blue curtain hangs straight from iron rods set on either side of the bed. Above the curtain a lamp is burning dimly, blighted by the pallor of the dawn. A dead, faint sky—the faint ashen sky which precedes the first rose tint; the circular window is filled with it, and the paling blue of the sky's colour contrasts with the deep blue of the bed's curtain, on which the Virgin's red hair is painted.

The angel stands by the side of the white bed—I should say floats, his fair feet hanging out of a few pale flames. White raiment clothes him, falling in long folds, leaving the arms and feet bare; in the right hand he holds a lily all in blossom; the left hand is extended in rigid gesture of warning. Brown-gold hair grows thick about the angel's neck; the shadowed profile is outlined against the hard, sad

sky; the expression of the face is deep and sphinx-like; he has come, it is clear, from vast realms of light, where uncertainty and doubt are unknown. The Dove passes by him towards the Virgin. Look upon her again, crouching in her white bed, her knees drawn to her bosom, her deep blue eyes—her dawn-tinted eyes—filled with ache, dream, and expectation. The shadows of dawn are on wall and floor—strange, blue shadows!—the Virgin's shadow lies on the wall, the angel's shadow falls across the coverlet.

Here, at least, there is drama, and the highest form of drama—spiritual drama; here, at least, there is story, and the highest form of story—symbol and suggestion. Rossetti has revealed the essence of this intensely human story—a story that, whenever we look below the surface, which is mediæval and religious, we recognise as a story of to-day, of yesterday, of all time. A girl thralled by the mystery of conception awakes at morn in palpitations, seeing visions.

Mr. Hacker's telling of the legend is to Rossetti's what a story in the *London Journal* is to a story by Balzac. The Virgin has apparently wandered outside the town. She is dressed in a long white garment neither beautiful nor explicit: is it a night-dress, or a piece of conventional drapery? On the right there is a long, silly tree, which looks as if it had been evolved out of a ball of green wool with knitting-needles, and above her floats an angel attired in a wisp of blue gauze. Rossetti, we know, was, in the strict sense of the word, hardly a painter at all, but he had something to say; and we can bear in painting, as we can in literature, with faulty expres-

sion, if there is something behind it. What is most intolerable in art is scholastic rodomontade. And what else is Mr. Hacker's execution? In every transmission the method seems to degenerate, and in this picture it seems to have touched bottom. It has become loose, all its original crispness is lost, and, complicated with *la peinture claire*, it seems incapable of expressing anything whatsoever. There is no variety of tone in that white sheet, there is nobody inside it, and the angel is as insincere and frivolous as any sketch in a young lady's album. The building at the back seems to have been painted with the scrapings of a dirty palette, and the sky in the left-hand corner comes out of the picture. I have only to add that the picture has been purchased out of the Chantry Bequest Fund, and the purchase is considered to be equivalent to a formal declaration that Mr. Hacker will be elected an Associate of the Royal Academy at the next election.

Mr. Hacker's election to the Academy—I speak of this election as a foregone conclusion—following as it does the election of Mr. Stanhope Forbes, makes it plain that the intention of the Academy is to support to the full extent of its great power a method of painting which is foreign and unnatural to English art, which, in the opinion of a large body of artists—and it is valuable to know that their opinion is shared by the best and most original of the French artists—is disintegrating and destroying our English artistic tradition. Mr. Hacker's election, and the three elections that will follow it, those of Mr. Shannon, Mr. Alfred East, and Mr. Bromley, will be equivalent

to an official declaration that those who desire to be English Academicians must adopt the French methods. Independent of the national disaster that these elections will inflict on art, they will be moreover flagrant acts of injustice. For I repeat, among the forty Academicians there is not one who considers these future Academicians to be comparable to Mr. Whistler, Mr. Albert Moore, Mr. Swan, or Mr. Sargent. No one holds such an opinion, and yet there is no doubt which way the elections in the Academy will go.

The explanation of this incredible anomaly I have given, the explanation is not a noble one, but that is not a matter for which I can be held responsible; suffice it to say, that my explanation is the only possible explanation. The Academy is a private commercial enterprise, and conducts its business on the lines which it considers the most advantageous; its commercialism has become flagrant and undeniable. If this is so—how the facts can otherwise be explained I cannot see—it is to be regretted that the Academy got its beautiful site for nothing. But regrets are vain. The only thing to do now is to see that the Academy is no longer allowed to sail under false colours. This article may awaken in the Academy a sense that it is not well to persist in open and flagrant defiance of public opinion, or it may serve to render the Academicians even more stiff-necked than before. In either case it will have accomplished its purpose.

THE ORGANISATION OF ART.

No fact is more painful to the modern mind than that men are not born with equal brains; and every day we grow more and more determined to thwart Nature's desire of inequality by public education. Whether everybody should be taught to read and write I leave to politicians—the matter is not important; but that the nation should not be instructed in drawing, music, painting, and English literature I will never cease to maintain. Everything that has happened in England for the last thirty years goes to prove that systematised education in art means artistic decadence.

To the ordinary mind there is something very reassuring in the words institutions, professors, examinations, medals, and titles of all kinds. All these things have been given of late years to art, and parents and guardians need no longer have any fear for those confided to their charge: the art of painting has been recognised as a profession! The principal institution where this profession is practised is called the Royal Academy. It owes its existence to the taste of a gentleman known as George the Third, and it has been dowered by the State to the extent of at least three hundred thousand pounds. Professors from Oxford, even bishops, dine there. The members of this institution put R.A. after their names; the president has been made a baronet;

there was even a rumour that he was going to be made a lord, and that he was not we must consider as another blow dealt against the dignity of art.

Literature does not offer so much scope for organisation as painting; but strenuous efforts are being made to organise it, and, by the aid of academies, examinations, and crowns, hopes are entertained that, before long, it will be brought into line with the other professions. And the journalists too are anxious to "erect their craft to the dignity of a profession which shall confer upon its members *certain social status* like that of the barrister and lawyer." Entrance is to be strictly conditional; no one is to have a right to practice without a diploma, and members are to be entitled to certain letters after their names. A movement is on foot to Churton-Collinise English literature at the universities, and every month Mr. Walter Besant raises a wail in the *Author* that the peerage is not as open to three-volume novelists as it is to brewers. He bewails the fact that no eminent man of letters, with the exception of Lord Tennyson, has been made the enforced associate of brewers and politicians. Mr. Besant does not think that titles in these democratic days are foolish and absurd, pitiful in the personality of those who own them by inheritance, grotesque in the personality of those on whom they have been conferred. Mr. Besant does not see that the desire of the baker, the brewer, the butcher, and I may add the three-volume novelist, to be addressed by small tradesmen and lackeys as "yer lordship," raises a smile on the lips even of the most *blasé*

I am advocating an unpopular *régime* I know, for the majority believe that art is in Queer Street if new buildings are not being raised, if official recognition of merits is not proclaimed, and if the newspapers do not teem with paragraphs concerning the homes of the Academicians. The wailing and gnashing of teeth that were heard when an intelligent portion of the Press induced Mr. Tate to withdraw his offer to build a gallery and furnish it with pictures by Messrs. Herkomer, Fildes, Leader, Long, are not forgotten. It was not urged that the pictures were valuable pictures; the merit or demerit of the pictures was not what interested, but the fact that a great deal of money was going to be spent, and that titles, badges, medals, crowns, would be given to those whose pictures were enshrined in the new temple of art. The Tate Gallery touched these folk as would an imposing review of troops, a procession of judges, or a coronation in Westminster Abbey. Their senses were tickled by the prospect of a show, their minds were stirred by some idea of organisation—something was about to be organised, and nothing appeals so much to the vulgar mind as organisation.

An epoch is represented by a word, and to organise represents the dominant idea of our civilisation. To organise is to be respectable, and as every one wants to be respectable, every one dreams of new schemes of organisation. Soldiers, sailors, policemen, members of parliament, independent voters, clerks in the post office, bus drivers, dockers, every imaginable variety of worker, domestic servants—it is difficult to think of any class that has not been organised of late years.

There is a gentleman in parliament who is anxious to do something in the way of social organisation for the gipsies. The gipsies have not appealed to him; they have professed no desire to have their social status raised; they have, I believe, disclaimed through their king, whoever he may be, all participation in the scheme of this benevolent gentleman. Nor does any sense of the absurdity of his endeavour blight the worthy gentleman's ardour. How should it? He, like the other organisers, is an unreasoning instrument in a great tendency of things. To organise something—or, put it differently, to educate some one—is to-day every man's ambition. So long as it is not himself, it matters no jot to him whom he educates. The gipsy under the hedge, the artist painting under a hill, it matters not. A technical school of instruction would enable the gipsy to harness his horse better than he does at present; and the artist would paint much better if he were taught to stipple, and examined by salaried professors in stipple, and given prizes for stippling. The general mind of our century is with education and organisation of every kind, and from this terrible general mind art seems unable to escape. Art, that poor little gipsy whose very condition of existence is freedom, who owns no code of laws, who evades all regulations, who groups himself under no standard, who can live only in disastrous times, when the world's attention is drawn to other things, and allows him life in shelter of the hedges, and dreams in sight of the stars, finds himself forced into a uniform—poor little fellow, how melancholy he looks on his high stool in the South Kensington Museum,

and notwithstanding the professors his hand drops from the drawing-board, unable to accomplish the admired stipple.

But solemn members of parliament are certain that official recognition must be extended to art. Art is an educational influence, and the Kensington galleries are something more than agreeable places, where sweethearts can murmur soft nothings under divine masterpieces. The utilitarian M.P. must find some justification for art; he is not sensible enough to understand that art justifies its own existence, that it is its own honour and glory; and he nourishes a flimsy lie, and votes that large sums of money shall be spent in endowing schools of art and founding picture galleries. Then there is another class—those who have fish to fry, and to whom art seems a convenient frying-pan. Mr. Tate craves for a museum to be called Tate's; or, if his princely gift gained him a title, which it may, the museum would be called—— What would be an appropriate name? There are men too who have trifles to sell, and they talk loudly of the glories of modern art, and the necessity of a British Luxembourg.

That France should have a Luxembourg is natural enough; that we should have one would be anomalous. We are a free-trading country. I pass over the failure of the Luxembourg to recognise genius, to save the artist of genius a struggle with insolent ignorance. What did the Luxembourg do for Corot, Millet, Manet, Degas, Monet, Renoir, Sisley, Pissaro? The Luxembourg chose rather to honour such pretentious mediocrities as Bouguereau, Jules Lefebvre,

Jules Breton, and their like. What has our Academy done to rescue struggling genius from poverty and obscurity? Did it save Alfred Stevens, the great sculptor of his generation, from the task of designing fire-irons? How often did the Academy refuse Cecil Lawson's pictures? When they did accept him, was it not because he had become popular in spite of the Academy? Did not the Academy refuse Mr. Whistler's portrait of his mother, and was it not hung at the last moment owing to a threat of one of the Academicians to resign if a place was not found for it? Place was found for it seven feet above the line. Has not the Academy for the last five-and-twenty years lent the whole stress and authority of its name to crush Mr. Whistler? Happily his genius was sufficient for the fight, and it was not until he had conquered past all question that he left this country. The record of the Academy is a significant one. But if it has exercised a vicious influence in art, its history is no worse than that of other academies. Here, as elsewhere, the Academy has tolerated genius when it was popular, and when it was not popular it has trampled upon it.

We have Free Trade in literature, why should we not have Free Trade in art? Why should not every artist go into the market without title or masquerade that blinds the public to the value of what he has to sell? I would turn art adrift, titleless, R.A.-less, out into the street and field, where, under the light of his original stars, the impassioned vagrant might dream once more, and for the mere sake of his dreams.

ART AND SCIENCE.

"MR. GOSCHEN," said a writer in a number of the *Speaker*, "deserves credit for having successfully resisted the attempt to induce him to sacrifice the interests of science at South Kensington to those of art." An excellent theme it seemed to me for an article; but the object of the writer being praise of Mr. Tate for his good intention, the opportunity was missed of distinguishing between the false claims of art and the real claims of science to public patronage and protection. True it is that to differentiate between art and science is like drawing distinctions between black and white; and in excuse I must plead the ordinary vagueness and weakness of the public mind, its inability very often to differentiate between things the most opposed, and a very general tendency to attempt to justify the existence of art on the grounds of utility —that is to say, educational influences and the counter attraction that a picture gallery offers to the public-house on Bank Holidays. Such reasoning is well enough at political meetings, but it does not find acceptance among thinkers. It is merely the flower of foolish belief that nineteenth century wisdom is greater than the collective instinct of the ages; that we are far in advance of our forefathers in religion, in morals, and in art. We are only in advance of our

forefathers in science. In art we have done little more than to spoil good canvas and marble, and not content with such misdeeds, we must needs insult art by attributing to her utilitarian ends and moral purposes.

Modern puritanism dares not say abolish art; so in thinly disguised speech it is pleaded that art is not nearly so useless as might easily be supposed; and it is often seriously urged that art may be reconciled after all with the most approved principles of humanitarianism, progress, and religious belief. Such is still the attitude of many Englishmen towards art. But art needs none of these apologists, even if we have to admit that the domestic utility of a Terburg is not so easily defined as that of mixed pickles or umbrellas. Another serious indictment is that art appeals rather to the few than to the many. True, indeed; and yet art is the very spirit and sense of the many. Yes; and all that is most national in us, all that is most sublime, and all that is most imperishable. The art of a nation is an epitome of the nation's intelligence and prosperity. There is no such thing as cosmopolitanism in art? alas! there is, and what a pitiful thing that thing is.

Unhappy is he who forgets the morals, the manners, the customs, the material and spiritual life of his country! England can do without any one of us, but not one of us can do without England. Study the question in the present, study it in the past, and you will find but one answer to your question—art is nationhood. All the great artistic epochs have followed on times of national enthu-

siasm, power, energy, spiritual and corporal adventure. When Greece was divided into half-a-dozen States she produced her greatest art. The same with Italy; and Holland, after having rivalled Greece in heroic effort, gave birth in the space of a single generation to between twenty and thirty great painters. And did not our Elizabethan drama follow close upon the defeat of the Armada, the discovery of America, and the Reformation? And did not Reynolds, Gainsborough, and Romney begin to paint almost immediately after the victories of Marlborough? To-day our empire is vast, and as our empire grows so does our art lessen. Literature still survives, though even there symptoms of decadence are visible. The Roman, the Chinese, and the Mahometan Empires are not distinguished for their art. But outside of the great Chinese Empire there lies a little State called Japan, which, without knowledge of Egypt or Greece, purely out of its own consciousness, evolved an art strangely beautiful and wholly original.

And as we continue to examine the question we become aware that no further progress in art is possible; that art reached its apogee two thousand five hundred years ago. True that Michael Angelo in the figures of "Day" and "Night," in the "Slave," in the "Moses," and in the "Last Judgment"—which last should be classed as sculpture—stands very, very close indeed to Phidias; his art is more complete and less perfect. But three hundred years have gone since the death of Michael Angelo, and to get another like him the world would have to be

steeped in the darkness of another Middle Age. And, passing on in our inquiry, we notice that painting reached its height immediately after Michael Angelo's death. Who shall rival the splendours, the profusion of Veronese, the opulence of Tintoretto, the richness of Titian, the pomp of Rubens? Or who shall challenge the technical beauty of Velasquez or of Hals, or the technical dexterity of Terburg, or Metzu, or Dow, or Adrian van Ostade? Passing on once again, we notice that art appears and disappears mysteriously like a ghost. It comes unexpectedly upon a people, and it goes in spite of artistic education, State help, picture-dealers, and annual exhibitions. We notice, too, that art is wholly untransmissible; nay, more, the fact that art is with us to-day is proof that art will not be with us to-morrow. Art cannot be acquired, nor can those who have art in their souls tell how it came there, or how they practise it. Art cannot be repressed, encouraged, or explained; it is something that transcends our knowledge, even as the principle of life.

Now I take it that science differs from art on all these points. Science is not national, it is essentially cosmopolitan. The science of one country is the same as that of another country. It is impossible to tell by looking at it whether the phonograph was invented in England or America. Unlike art, again, science is essentially transmissible; every discovery leads of necessity to another discovery, and the fact that science is with us to-day proves that science will be still more with us to-morrow. Nothing can extinguish science except an invasion of barbarians, and

the barbarians that science has left alive would hardly suffice. Art has its limitations, science has none. It would, however, be vain to pursue our differentiation any further. It must be clear that what are most opposed in this world are art and science; therefore—I think I can say therefore—all the arguments I used to show that a British Luxembourg would be prejudicial to the true interests of art may be used in favour of the endowment of a college of science at South Kensington. Why should not the humanitarianism of Mr. Tate induce him to give his money to science instead of to art? As well build a hothouse for swallows to winter in as a British Luxembourg; but science is a good old barn-door fowl; build her a hen-roost, and she will lay you eggs, and golden eggs. Give your money to science, for there is an evil side to every other kind of almsgiving. It is well to save life, but the world is already overstocked with life; and in saving life one may be making the struggle for existence still more unendurable for those who come after. But in giving your money to science you are accomplishing a definite good; the results of science have always been beneficent. Science will alleviate the wants of the world more wisely than the kindest heart that ever beat under the robe of a Sister of Mercy; the hands of science are the mercifulest in the end, and it is science that will redeem man's hope of Paradise.

ROYALTY IN ART.

THE subject is full of suggestion, and though any adequate examination of it would lead me beyond the limits of this paper, I think I may venture to lift its fringe. To do so, we must glance at its historic side. We know the interest that Julius the Second took in the art of Michael Angelo and Raphael: had it not been for the Popes, St. Peter's would not have been built, nor would "The Last Judgment" have been painted. We know, too, of Philip the Fourth's great love of the art of Velasquez. The Court of Frederick the Great was a republic of art and letters; and is it not indirectly to a Bavarian monarch that we owe Wagner's immortal *chefs-d'œuvre*, and hence the musical evolution of the century? With these facts before us it would be puerile to deny that in the past Royalty has lent invaluable assistance in the protection and development of art. Even if we turn to our own country we find at least one monarch who could distinguish a painter when he met one. Charles the Second did not hesitate in the patronage he extended to Vandyke, and it is—as I have frequently pointed out—to the influence of Vandyke that we owe all that is worthiest and valuable in English art. Bearing these facts in mind—and it is impossible not to bear them in mind—it is difficult to go to the

Victorian Exhibition and not ask: Does the present Royal Family exercise any influence on English art? This is the question that the Victorian Exhibition puts to us. After fifty years of reign, the Queen throws down the gauntlet; and speaking through the medium of the Victorian Exhibition, she says: "This is how I have understood art; this is what I have done for art; I countenance, I court, I challenge inquiry."

Yes, truly the Victorian Exhibition is an object-lesson in Royalty. If all other records were destroyed, the historian, five hundred years hence, could reconstitute the psychological characteristics, the mentality, of the present reigning family from the pictures on exhibition there. For in the art that it has chosen to patronise (a more united family on the subject of art it would be hard to imagine—nowhere can we detect the slightest difference of opinion), the Queen, her spouse, and her children appear to be singularly *bourgeois:* a staid German family congenially and stupidly commonplace, accepting a little too seriously its mission of crowns and sceptres, and accomplishing its duties, grown out of date, somewhat witlessly, but with heavy dignity and forbearance. Waiving all racial characteristics, the German *bourgeois* family mind appears plainly enough in all these family groups; no other mind could have permitted the perpetration of so much stolid family placidity, of so much "*frauism.*" "Exhibit us in our family circle, in our coronation robes, in our wedding dresses, let the likeness be correct and the colours bright—we leave the rest to you." Such seems to have

been the Royal artistic edict issued in the beginning of the present reign. In no instance has the choice fallen on a painter of talent; but the middling from every country in Europe seems to have found a ready welcome at the Court of Queen Victoria. We find there middling Germans, middling Italians, middling Frenchmen—and all receiving money and honour from our Queen.

The Queen and the Prince Consort do not seem to have been indifferent to art, but to have deliberately, and with rare instinct, always picked out what was most worthless; and regarded in the light of documents, these pictures are valuable; for they tell plainly the real mind of the Royal Family. We see at once that the family mind is wholly devoid of humour; the very faintest sense of humour would have saved them from exhibiting themselves in so ridiculous a light. The large picture of the Queen and the Prince Consort surrounded with their children, the Prince Consort in knee-breeches, showing a finely-turned calf, is sufficient to occasion the overthrow of a dynasty if humour were the prerogative of the many instead of being that of the few. This masterpiece is signed, "By G. Belli, after F. Winterhalter;" and in this picture we get the mediocrity of Italy and Germany in quintessential strength. These pictures also help us to realise the private life of our Royal Family. It must have spent a great deal of time in being painted. The family pictures are numberless, and the family taste is visible upon them all. And there must be some strange magnetism in the family to be able to

transfuse so much of itself into the minds of so many painters. So like is one picture to another, that the Exhibition seems to reveal the secret that for the last fifty years the family has done nothing but paint itself. And in these days, when every one does a little painting, it is easy to imagine the family at work from morn to eve. Immediately after breakfast the easels are set up, the Queen paints the Princess Louise, the Duke of Edinburgh paints Princess Beatrice, the Princess Alice paints the Prince of Wales, etc. The easels are removed for lunch, and the moment the meal is over work is resumed.

After having seen the Victorian Exhibition, I cannot imagine the Royal Family in any other way; I am convinced that is how they must have passed their lives for the last quarter of a century. The names of G. Belli and F. Winterhalter are no more than flimsy make-believes. And are there not excellent reasons for holding to this opinion? Has not the Queen published, or rather surreptitiously issued, certain little collections of drawings? Has not the Princess Louise, the artist of the family, publicly exhibited sculpture? The Princess Beatrice, has she not done something in the way of designing? The Duke of Edinburgh, he is a musician. And it is in these little excursions into art that the family most truly manifests its *bourgeois* nature. The sincerest *bourgeois* are those who scribble little poems and smudge little canvases in the intervals between an afternoon reception and a dinner-party. The amateur artist is always the most inaccessible to ideas; he is always the most fervid admirer of the commonplace. A staid German family

dabbling in art in its leisure hours—the most inartistic, the most Philistine of all Royal families—this is the lesson that the Victorian Exhibition impresses upon us.

But why should not the Royal Family decorate its palaces with bad art? Why should it not choose the most worthless portrait-painters of all countries? Dynasties have never been overthrown for failure in artistic taste. I am aware how insignificant the matter must seem to the majority of readers, and should not have raised the question, but since the question has been raised, and by her Majesty, I am well within my right in attempting a reply. The Victorian Exhibition is a flagrant representation of a *bourgeois*, though a royal, family. From the beginning to the end the Exhibition is this and nothing but this. In the Entrance Hall, at the doorway, we are confronted with the Queen's chief artistic sin—Sir Edgar Boehm.

Thirty years ago this mediocre German sculptor came to England. The Queen discovered him at once, as if by instinct, and she employed him on work that an artist would have shrunk from—namely, statuettes in Highland costume. The German sculptor turned out this odious and ridiculous costume as fast as any Scotch tailor. He was then employed on busts, and he did the entire Royal Family in marble. Again, it would be hard to give a reason why Royalty should not be allowed to possess bad sculpture. The pity is that the private taste of Royalty creates the public taste of the nation, and the public result of the gracious interest that the

Queen was pleased to take in Mr. Edgar Boehm, is the disfigurement of London by several of the worst statues it is possible to conceive. It is bad enough that we should have German princes foisted upon us, but German statues are worse. The ancient site of Temple Bar has been disfigured by Boehm with statues of the Queen and the Prince of Wales, so stupidly conceived and so stupidly modelled that they look like figures out of a Noah's Ark. The finest site in London, Hyde Park Corner, has been disfigured by Boehm with a statue of the Duke of Wellington so bad, so paltry, so characteristically the work of a German mechanic, that it is impossible to drive down the beautiful road without experiencing a sensation of discomfort and annoyance. The original statue that was pulled down in the interests of Boehm was, it is true, bad English, but bad English suits the landscape better than cheap German. And this disgraceful thing will remain, disfiguring the finest site in London, until, perhaps, some dynamiter blows the thing up, ostensibly to serve the cause of Ireland, but really in the interests of art. At the other end of the park we have the Albert Memorial. We sympathise with the Queen in her grief for the Prince Consort, but we cannot help wishing that her grief were expressed more artistically.

A city so naturally beautiful as London can do without statues; the question is not so much how to get good statues, but how to protect London against bad statues. If for the next twenty-five years we might celebrate the memory of each great man by the destruction of a statue we might undo a great part of

the mischief for which Royalty is mainly responsible. I do not speak of Boehm's Jubilee coinage—the melting-pot will put that right one of these days—but his statues, beyond some slight hope from the dynamiters, will be always with us. Had he lived, London would have disappeared under his statues; at the time of his death they were popping up by twos and threes all over the town. Our lovely city is our inheritance; London should be to the Londoner what Athens is to the Athenian. What would the Athenians have thought of Pericles if he had proposed the ornamentation of the city with Persian sculpture? Boehm is dead, but another German will be with us before long, and, under Royal patronage, will continue the odious disfigurement of our city. If our Royal Family possessed any slight æsthetic sense its influence might be turned to the service of art; but as it has none, it would be well for Royalty to refrain. Art can take care of itself if left to the genius of the nation, and freed from foreign control. The Prince of Wales has never affected any artistic sympathies. For this we are thankful: we have nothing to reproach him with except the unfortunate "Roll-call" incident. Royalty is to-day but a social figment—it has long ago ceased to control our politics. Would that Royalty would take another step and abandon its influence in art.

ART PATRONS.

THE general art patron in England is a brewer or distiller. Five-and-forty is the age at which he begins to make his taste felt in the art world, and the cause of his collection is the following, or an analogous reason. After a heavy dinner, when the smoke-cloud is blowing lustily, Brown says to Smith: "I know you don't care for pictures, so you wouldn't think that Leader was worth fifteen hundred pounds; well, I paid all that, and something more too, at the last Academy for it." Smith, who has never heard of Leader, turns slowly round on his chair, and his brain, stupefied with strong wine and tobacco, gradually becomes aware of a village by a river bank seen in black silhouette upon a sunset sky. Wine and food have made him happily sentimental, and he remembers having seen a village looking very like that village when he was paying his attentions to the eldest Miss Jones. Yes, it was looking like that, all quite sharp and clear on a yellow sky, and the trees were black and still just like those trees. Smith determines that he too shall possess a Leader. He may not be quite as big a man as Brown, but he has been doing pretty well lately. . . . There's no reason why he shouldn't have a Leader. So irredeemable mischief has been

done at Brown's dinner-party: another five or six thousand a year will henceforth exert its mighty influence in the service of bad art.

Poor Smith, who never looked attentively at a picture before, does not see that what inspires such unutterable memories of Ethel Jones is but a magnified Christmas card; the dark trees do not suggest treacle to him, nor the sunset sky the rich cream which he is beginning to feel he partook of too freely; he does not see the thin drawing, looking as if it had been laboriously scratched out with a nail, nor yet the feeble handling which suggests a child and a pot of gum. But of technical achievement how should Mr. Smith know anything?—that mysterious something, different in every artist, taking a thousand forms, and yet always recognisable to the educated eye. How should poor Smith see anything in the picture except what Mr. Whistler wittily calls "rather a foolish sunset"? To perceive Mr. Leader's deficiency in technical accomplishment may seem easy to the young girl who has studied drawing for six months at South Kensington; but Smith is a stupid man who has money-grubbed for five-and-twenty years in the City; and through the fumes of wine and tobacco he resolves to have a Leader. He does not hesitate, he consults no one—and why should he? Mr. Leader put R.A. after his name—he charges fifteen hundred. Besides, the village on the river bank with a sunset behind is obviously a beautiful thing. . . . The mischief has been done, the irredeemable mischief has been achieved. Smith buys a Leader, and the Leader begets a Long, the Long begets a Fildes,

the Fildes begets a Dicksee, the Dicksee begets a Herkomer.

Such is the genesis of Mr. Smith's collection, and it is typical of a hundred now being formed in London. In ten years Mr. Smith has laid out forty or fifty thousand pounds. He asks his friends if they don't like his collection quite as well as Brown's: he urges that he can't see much difference himself. Nor is there much difference. The same articles—that is to say, identically similar articles—vulgarly painted sunsets, vulgarly painted doctors, vulgarly painted babies, vulgarly painted manor-houses with saddle-horses and a young lady hesitating on the steps, have been acquired at or about the same prices. The popular R.A.s have appealed to popular sentiment, and popular sentiment has responded; and the City has paid the price. But Time is not at all a sentimental person: he is quite unaffected by the Adelphi reality of the doctor's face or the mawkish treacle of the village church; and when the collection is sold at auction twenty years hence, it will fetch about a fourth of the price that was paid.

Mr. Smith's artistic taste knows no change; it was formed on Mr. Brown's Leader, and developing logically from it, passing through Long, Fildes, and Dicksee, it touches high-water mark at Hook. The pretty blue sea and the brown fisher-folk call for popular admiration almost as imperatively as the sunset in the village churchyard; and when an artist —for in his adventures among dealers Mr. Smith met one or two—points out how much less like treacle Mr. Hook is than Mr. Leader, and how much more

flowing and supple the drawing of the sea-shore is than the village seen against the sunset, Mr. Smith thinks he understands what is meant. But remembering the fifteen hundred pounds he paid for the cream sky and the treacle trees, he is quite sure that nothing could be better.

The ordinary perception of the artistic value of a picture does not arise above Mr. Smith's. I have studied the artistic capacity of the ordinary mind long and diligently, and I know my analysis of it is exact; and if I do not exaggerate the artistic incapabilities of Mr. Smith, it must be admitted that the influence which his money permits him to exercise in the art world is an evil influence, and is exercised persistently to the very great detriment of the real artist. But it will be said that the moneyed man cannot be forbidden to buy the pictures that please him. No, but men should not be elected Academicians merely because their pictures are bought by City men, and this is just what is done. Do not think that Sir John Millais is unaware that Mr. Long's pictures, artistically considered, are quite worthless. Do not think that Mr. Orchardson does not turn in contempt from Mr. Leader's tea-trays. Do not think that every artist, however humble, however ignorant, does not know that Mr. Goodall's portrait of Mrs. Kettlewell stands quite beyond the range of criticism. Mr. Long, Mr. Leader, and Mr. Goodall were not elected Academicians because the Academicians who voted for them approved of their pictures, but because Mr. Smith and his like purchased their pictures;

and by electing these painters to Academic honours the taste of Mr. Smith receives official confirmation.

The public can distinguish very readily—far better than it gets credit for—between bad literature and good; nor is the public deaf to good music, but the public seems quite powerless to distinguish between good painting and bad. No, I am wrong; it distinguishes very well between bad painting and good, only it invariably prefers the bad. The language of speech we are always in progress of learning; and the language of music being similar to that of speech, it becomes easier to hear that Wagner is superior to Rossini than to see that Whistler is better than Leader. Of all languages none is so difficult, so varying, so complex, so evanescent, as that of paint; and yet it is precisely the works written in this language that every one believes himself able to understand, and ready to purchase at the expense of a large part of his fortune. If I could make such folk understand how illusory is their belief, what a service I should render to art—if I could only make them understand that the original taste of man is always for the obvious and the commonplace, and that it is only by great labour and care that man learns to understand as beautiful that which the uneducated eye considers ugly.

Why will the art patron never take advice? I should seek it if I bought pictures. If Degas were to tell me that a picture I had intended to buy was not a good one I should not buy it, and if Degas were to praise a picture in which I could see no

merit I should buy it and look at it until I did. Such confession will make me appear weak-minded to many; but this is so, because much instruction is necessary even to understand how infinitely more Degas knows than any one else can possibly know. The art patron never can understand as much about art as the artist, but he can learn a good deal. It is fifteen years since I went to Degas's studio for the first time. I looked at his portraits, at his marvellous ballet-girls, at the washerwomen, and understood nothing of what I saw. My blindness to Degas's merit alarmed me not a little, and I said to Manet—to whom I paid a visit in the course of the afternoon—"It is very odd, Manet, I understand your work, but for the life of me I cannot see the great merit you attribute to Degas." To hear that some one has not understood your rival's work as well as he understands your own is sweet flattery, and Manet only murmured under his breath that it was very odd, since there were astonishing things in Degas.

Since those days I have learnt to understand Degas; but unfortunately I have not been able to transmit my knowledge to any one. When important pictures by Degas could be bought for a hundred and a hundred and fifty pounds apiece, I tried hard to persuade some City merchants to buy them. They only laughed and told me they liked Long better. Degas has gone up fifty per cent., Long has declined fifty per cent. Whistler's can be bought to-day for comparatively small prices;[1] in twenty years they will cost three times as much; in twenty years Mr.

[1] This was written before the Whistler boom.

Leader's pictures will probably not be worth half as much as they are to-day. What I am saying is the merest commonplace, what every artist knows; but go to an art patron—a City merchant—and ask him to pay five hundred for a Degas, and he will laugh at you; he will say, "Why, I could get a Dicksee or a Leader for a thousand or two."

PICTURE DEALERS.

In the eighteenth century, and the centuries that preceded it, artists were visited by their patrons, who bought what the artist had to sell, and commissioned him to paint what he was pleased to paint. But in our time the artist is visited by a showily-dressed man, who comes into the studio whistling, his hat on the back of his head. This is the West-End dealer: he throws himself into an arm-chair, and if there is nothing on the easels that appeals to the uneducated eye, the dealer lectures the artist on his folly in not considering the exigencies of public taste. On public taste—that is to say, on the uneducated eye—the dealer is a very fine authority. His father was a dealer before him, and the son was brought up on prices, he lisped in prices, and was taught to reverence prices. He cannot see the pictures for prices, and he lies back, looking round distractedly, not listening to the timid, struggling artist who is foolishly venturing an explanation. Perhaps the public might come to his style of painting if he were to persevere. The dealer stares at the ceiling, and his lips recall his last evening at the music-hall. If the public don't like it—why, they don't like it, and the sooner the artist comes round the better. That is what he has to say on the subject, and, if sneers and sarcasm succeed in bringing the artist round to

popular painting, the dealer buys; and when he begins to feel sure that the uneducated eye really hungers for the new man, he speaks about getting up a boom in the newspapers.

The Press is in truth the great dupe; the unpaid jackal that goes into the highways and byways for the dealer! The stockbroker gets the Bouguereau, the Herkomer, the Alfred East, and the Dagnan-Bouveret that his soul sighs for; but the Press gets nothing except unreadable copy, and yet season after season the Press falls into the snare. It seems only necessary for a dealer to order an artist to frame the contents of his sketch-book, and to design an invitation card—"Scenes on the Coast of Denmark," sketches made by Mr. So-and-so during the months of June, July, and August—to secure half a column of a goodly number of London and provincial papers —to put it plainly, an advertisement that Reckitts or Pears or Beecham could not get for hundreds of pounds. One side of the invitation card is filled up with a specimen design, usually such a futile little thing as we might expect to find in a young lady's sketch-book: "Copenhagen at Low Tide," "Copenhagen at High Tide," "View of the Cathedral from the Mouth of the River," "The Hills of —— as seen from off the Coast." And this topography every art critic will chronicle, and his chronicling will be printed free of charge amongst the leading columns of the paper. Nor is this the worst case. The request to notice a collection of paintings and drawings made by the late Mr. So-and-so seems even more flagrant, for then there is no question of benefiting a young

artist who stands in need of encouragement or recognition; the show is simply a dealer's exhibition of his ware. True, that the ware may be so rare and excellent that it becomes a matter of public interest; if so, the critic is bound to notice the show. But the ordinary show—a collection of works by a tenth-rate French artist—why should the Press advertise such wares gratis? The public goes to theatres and to flower-shows and to race-courses, but it does not go to these dealers' shows—the dealer's friends and acquaintances go on private view day, and for the rest of the season the shop is quieter than the tobacconist's next door.

For the last month every paper I took up contained glowing accounts of Messrs. Tooth & MacLean's galleries (picture dealers do not keep shops—they keep galleries), glowing accounts of a large and extensive assortment of Dagnan-Bouveret, Bouguereau, Rosa Bonheur: very nice things in their way, just such things as I would take Alderman Samuelson to see.

These notices, taken out in the form of legitimate advertisement, would run into hundreds of pounds; and I am quite at a loss to understand why the Press abandons so large a part of its revenue. For if the Press did not notice these exhibitions, the dealers would be forced into the advertising columns, and when a little notice was published of the ware, it would be done as a little return—as a little encouragement for advertising, on the same principle as ladies' papers publish visits to dressmakers. The present system of noticing Messrs. Tooth's and not noticing

Messrs. Pears' is to me wholly illogical; and, to use the word which makes every British heart beat quicker—unbusinesslike. But with business I have nothing to do—my concern is with art; and if the noticing of dealers' shows were not inimical to art, I should not have a word to say against the practice. Messrs. Tooth & MacLean trade in Salon and Academy pictures, so the notices the Press prints are the equivalent of a subvention granted by the Press for the protection of this form of art. If I were a statistician, it would interest me to turn over the files of the newspapers for the last fifty years and calculate how much Messrs. Agnew have had out of the Press in the shape of free advertisement. And when we think what sort of art this vast sum of money went to support, we cease to wonder at the decline of public taste.

My quarrel is no more with Messrs. Agnew than it is with Messrs. Tooth & MacLean; my quarrel—I should say, my reprimand—is addressed to the Press—to the Press that foolishly, unwittingly, not knowing what it was doing, threw such power into the hands of the dealers that our exhibitions are now little more than the tributaries of the Bond Street shop? This statement will shock many; but let them think, and they will see it could not be otherwise. Messrs. Agnew have thousands and thousands of pounds invested in the Academy—that is to say, in the works of Academicians. When they buy the work of any one outside of the Academy, they talk very naturally of their new man to their friends the Academicians, and the Academicians are anxious to please their best customer. It was in some such way

that Mr. Burne-Jones's election was decided. For Mr. Burne-Jones was held in no Academic esteem. His early pictures had been refused at Burlington House, and he resolved never to send there again. For many years he remained firm in his determination. In the meantime the public showed unmistakable signs of accepting Mr. Jones, whereupon Messrs. Agnew also accepted Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones was popular; he was better than popular, he stood on the verge of popularity; but there was nothing like making things safe—Jones's election to the Academy would do that. Jones's scruples would have to be overcome; he must exhibit once in the Academy. The Academicians would be satisfied with that. Mr. Jones did exhibit in the Academy; he was elected on the strength of this one exhibit. He has never exhibited since. These are the facts: confute them who may, explain them who can.

It is true that the dealer cannot be got rid of—he is a vice inherent in our civilisation; but if the Press withdrew its subvention, his monopoly would be curtailed, and art would be recruited by new talent, at present submerged. Art would gradually withdraw from the bluster and boom of an arrogant commercialism, and would attain her olden dignity—that of a quiet handicraft. And in this great reformation only two classes would suffer—the art critics and the dealers. The newspaper proprietors would profit largely, and the readers of newspapers would profit still more largely, for they would no longer be bored by the publication of dealers' catalogues expanded with insignificant comment.

MR. BURNE-JONES AND THE ACADEMY.

To the Editor of "The Speaker."

SIR,—Your art critic "G. M." is in error on a matter of fact, and as everybody knows the relationship between fact and theory, I am afraid his little error vitiates the argument he propounds with so much vigour. It was *after*, and not before, his election as an Associate that Mr. Burne-Jones made his solitary appearance as an exhibitor at the Royal Academy.—Yours truly, etc.,

R. I.

To the Editor of "The Speaker."

SIR,—It has always been my rule not to enter into argument with my critics, but in the instance of "R. I." I find myself obliged to break my rule. "R. I." thinks that the mistake I slipped into regarding Mr. Burne-Jones's election as an Associate vitiates the argument which he says I propound with vigour. I, on the contrary, think that the fact that Mr. Burne-Jones was elected as an Associate before he had exhibited in the Royal Academy advances my argument. Being in doubt as to the particular fact, I unconsciously imagined the general fact, and when man's imagination intervenes it is always to soften, to attenuate crudities which only nature is capable of.

For twenty years, possibly for more, Mr. Burne-Jones was a resolute opponent of the Royal Academy, as resolute, though not so truculent, an opponent as Mr. Whistler. When he became a popular painter Mr. Agnew gave him a commission of fifteen thousand pounds—the largest, I believe, ever given—to paint four pictures, the "Briar Rose" series. Some time after—before he has exhibited in the Academy—Mr. Jones is elected as an Associate. The Academicians cannot plead that their eyes were suddenly opened to his genius. If this miracle had happened they would not have left him an Associate, but would have on the first vacancy elected him a full Academician. How often have they passed him over? Is Mr. Jones the only instance of a man being elected to the Academy who had never exhibited there? Perhaps "R. I." will tell us. I do not know, and have not time to hunt up records.

G. M.

THE ALDERMAN IN ART.

MANCHESTER and Liverpool are rival cities. They have matched themselves one against the other, and the prize they are striving for is—Which shall be the great art-centre of the North of England. The artistic rivalry of the two cities has become obvious of late years. Manchester bids against Liverpool, Liverpool bids against Manchester; the results of the bidding are discussed, and so an interest in art is created. It was Manchester that first threw her strength into this artistic rivalry. It began with the decorations which Manchester commissioned Mr. Madox Brown to paint for the town hall. Manchester's choice of an artist was an excellent and an original one. Mr. Madox Brown was not an Academician; he was not known to the general public; he merely commanded the respect of his brother-artists.

The painting of these pictures was the work of years; the placing of every one was duly chronicled in the press, and it was understood in London that Manchester was entirely satisfied. But lo! on the placing in position of the last picture but one of the series an unseemly dispute was raised by some members of the Corporation, and it was seriously debated in committee whether the best course to pursue would not be to pass a coat of whitewash over

the offending picture. It is impossible to comment adequately on such barbarous conduct; perhaps at no distant date it will be proposed to burn some part of Mrs. Ryland's perfect gift—the Althorp Library. There may be some books in that library which do not meet with some councillor's entire approval. Barbarism on one side, and princely generosity on the other, combined to fix attention upon Manchester, and, in common with a hundred others, I found myself thinking on the relation of Manchester and Liverpool to art, and speculating on the direction that these new influences were taking.

There are two exhibitions now open in Manchester and Liverpool—the permanent and the annual. The permanent collections must first occupy our attention, for it is through them that we shall learn what sort and kind of artistic taste obtains in the North. At first sight these collections present no trace of any distinct influence. They seem to be simply miscellaneous purchases, made from every artist whose name happens to be the fashion; and considered as permanent illustrations of the various fashions that have prevailed in Bond Street during the last ten years, these collections are curious and perhaps valuable documents in the history of art. But is there any real analogy between a dressmaker's shop and a picture gallery? Plumes are bought because they are "very much worn just now," but then plumes are not so expensive as pictures, and it seems to be hardly worth while to buy pictures for the sake of the momentary fashion in painting which they represent.

Manchester and Liverpool have not, however,

grasped the essential fact that it is impossible to form an art gallery by sending to London for the latest fashions. Now and then the advice of some gentleman knowing more about art than his colleagues has found expression in the purchase of a work of art; but the picture that hangs next to the fortuitous purchase tells how the taste of the cultured individual was overruled by the taste of the uncultured mass at the next meeting. I could give many, but two instances must suffice to explain and to prove my point. Two years ago Mr. Albert Moore exhibited a very beautiful picture in the Academy—three women, one sleeping and two sitting on a yellow couch, in front of a starlit and moonlit sea. In the same Academy there was exhibited a picture by Mr. Bartlett—a picture of some gondoliers rowing or punting or sculling (I am ignorant of the aquatic habits of the Venetians) for a prize. The Liverpool Gallery has bought and hung these pictures side by side. Such divagations of taste make the visitor smile, and he thinks perforce of the accounts of the stormy meetings of councillors that find their way into the papers. Artistic appreciation of these two pictures in the same individual is not possible. What should we think of a man who said that he did not know which he preferred—a poem by Tennyson, or a story out of the *London Journal*? Catholicity of taste does not mean an absolute abandonment of all discrimination; and some thread of intellectual kinship must run through the many various manifestations of artistic temperament which go to form a collection of pictures. Things may be various without being discrepant.

The Manchester Gallery has purchased Lawson's beautiful picture, "The Deserted Garden"; likewise Mr. Fildes' picture of a group of Venetian girls sitting on steps, the principal figure in a blue dress with an orange handkerchief round her neck, the simple—I may say child-like—scheme of colour beyond which Mr. Fildes never seems to stray. The Lawson and the Fildes agree no better than do the Moore and the Bartlett; and the only thing that occurs to me is that the cities should toss up which should go for Fildes and Bartlett, and which for Lawson and Moore. By such division harmony would be attained, and one city would be going the wrong road, the other the right road; at present both are going zigzag.

But notwithstanding the multifarious tastes displayed in these collections, and the artistic chaos they represent, we can, when we examine them closely, detect an influence which abides though it fluctuates, and this influence is that of our discredited Academy. The Manchester and Liverpool collection are merely weak reflections of the Chantrey Fund collection. Now, if the object of these cities be to adopt the standard of taste that obtains in Burlington House, to abdicate their own taste—if they have any—and to fortify themselves against all chance of acquiring a taste in art, it would clearly be better for the two corporations to hand over the task of acquiring pictures to the Academicians. The responsibility will be gladly accepted, and the trust will be administered with the same honesty and straightforwardness as has been displayed in the administration of the moneys

which the unfortunate Chantrey entrusted to the care of the Academicians.

The sowing of evil seed is an irreparable evil; none can tell where the wind will carry it, and unexpected crops are found far and wide. I had thought that the harm occasioned to art by the Academy and its corollary, the Chantrey Fund, began and ended in London. But in Manchester and Liverpool I was speedily convinced of my mistake. Art in the provinces is little more than a reflection of the Academy. The majority of the pictures represent the taste of men who have no knowledge of art, and who, to disguise their ignorance, follow the advice which the Academy gives to provincial England in the pictures it purchases under the terms—or, rather, under its own reading of the terms—of the Chantrey Bequest Fund. One of the first things I heard in Manchester was that the committee had been fortunate enough to secure the nude figure which Mr. Hacker exhibited this year in the Academy. And on my failing to express unbounded admiration for the purchase, I was asked if I was aware that the Academy had purchased "The Annunciation" for the Chantrey Bequest Fund. "Surely," said a member of the committee, "you agree that our picture is the better of the two." I answered: "Poor Mr. Chantrey's money always goes to buy the worst, or as nearly as possible the worst, picture the artist ever painted—the picture for which the artist would never be likely to find a purchaser."

Last month the Liverpool County Council assembled to discuss the purchase of two pictures recommended

by the art committee—"Summer," by Mr. Hornel; and "The Higher Alps," by Mr. Stott, of Oldham. The discussion that ensued is described by the *Liverpool Daily Post* as "amusing." It was ludicrous, and those who do not care a snap of the fingers about art might think it amusing. The joke was started by Mr. Lynskey, who declared that the two pictures in question were mere daubs. Mr. Lynskey did not think that the Glasgow school of painting had yet been recognised by the public, and until it had he did not see why the corporation should pay £500 for these two productions, merely for the sake of experimenting. Thereby we are to understand that in forming a collection of pictures it is the taste of the public that must be considered. "Of course," cry the aldermen; "we are here to supply the public with what it wants." I repeat, the corporations of Manchester and Liverpool do not seem to have yet grasped the fact that there is no real analogy between a picture gallery and a dressmaker's shop.

The next speaker was Mr. Burgess. He could not imagine how any one could recommend the purchase of such pictures. The Mr. Burgesses of twenty-five years ago could not understand how any one could buy Corots. Mr. Smith asked if it were really a fact that the committee had bought the pictures. He was assured that they would be bought only if the council approved of them; whereupon Alderman Samuelson declared that if that were so they would not be bought. Dr. Cummins compared the pictures to cattle in the parish pound, and it is reported that the remark caused much laughter. Then some one said—I think

it was Mr. Smith—that the pictures had horrified him; whereupon there was more laughter. Then a member proposed that they should have the pictures brought in, to which proposition a member objected, amid much laughter. Then Mr. Daughan suggested that the chairman and vice-chairman should explain the meaning of the pictures to the council. More laughter and more County Council humour. The meeting was a typical meeting, and it furnishes us with the typical councillor.

In the report of the meeting before me a certain alderman seems to have been as garrulous as he was irrepressible. He not only spoke at greater length than the rest of the councillors put together, but did not hesitate to frequently interrupt the members of the committee with remarks. Speaking of pictures by Millais, Holman Hunt, and Rossetti, he said:—"We have had exhibitions, and the works of these great artists were at various times closely scrutinised, and they had borne the most careful scrutiny that could be directed to them. Now I defy you to take a number of pictures such as those in dispute, and do the same with them." No one could have spoken the words I have quoted who was not absolutely ignorant of the art of painting. Imagine the poor alderman going round, magnifying-glass in hand, subjecting Millais and Holman Hunt to the closest scrutiny. And how easy it is to determine what was passing in his mind during the examination of the Glasgow school! "I can't see where this foot finishes; the painter was not able to draw it, so he covered it up with a shadow. In the pictures of that fellow Guthrie

the grass is merely a tint of green, whereas in the 'Shadow of the Cross' I can count all the shavings."

But we will not seek to penetrate further into this very alderman-like mind. He declared that the Glasgow school of painting was "no more in comparison to what they recognised as a school of painting than a charity school was to the University of Oxford." I am sorry our alderman did not say what was the school of painting that he and his fellow-aldermen admired. In the absence of any precise information on the point I will venture to suggest that the school they recognise is the school of Bartlett and Solomon. The gallery possesses two large works by these masters—the Gondoliers, and the great picture of Samson, which fills an entire end of one room. But what would be of still greater interest would be to hear our alderman explain what he meant by this astonishing sentence:—"The only motive of Mr. Hornel's picture is a mode of art or rather artifice, in introducing a number of colours with the idea of making them harmonise; and this could be done, and had been done, by means of the palette-knife."

I have not the least idea what this means, but I am none the less interested. For, although void of sense, the alderman's words allow me to look down a long line of illustrious ancestry—Prud'homme, Chadband, Stiggins, Phillion, the apothecary Homais in "Madame Bovary." After passing through numerous transformations, an eternal idea at last incarnates itself in a final form. How splendid our alderman is! Never did a corporation produce so fine a flower. He is sententious, he is artistic. And how he lets fall from

his thick lips those scraps of art-jargon which he picked up in the studio where he sat for his portrait! He is moral; he thinks that nude figures should not be sanctioned by the corporation; he believes in the Bank, and proposes the Queen's health as if he were fulfilling an important duty; he goes to the Academy, and dictates the æstheticism of his native town. There he is, his hand in his white waistcoat, in the pose chosen for the presentation portrait, at the moment when he delivered himself of his famous apophthegm, "When the nude comes into art, art flies out of the window."

The alderman is the reef which for the last five-and-twenty years has done so much to ruin and to wreck every artistic movement which the enthusiasm and intelligence of individuals have set on foot. The mere checking of the obstruction of the individual will not suffice; other aldermen will arise—equally ignorant, equally talkative, equally obstructive. And until the race is relegated to its proper function, bimetallism and sewage, the incidents I have described will happen again and again.

A marvellous accident that it should have come to be believed that a corporation could edit a picture gallery! Whence did the belief originate? whence did it spring? and in what fancied substance of fact did it catch root? A tapeworm-like notion—come we know not whence, nor how. And it has thriven unobserved, though signs of its presence stare plainly enough in the pallid face of the wretched gallery. Curious it is that it should have remained undetected

so long; curious, indeed, it is that straying thought should have led no one to remember that every great art collection of the world has grown out of an individual intelligence. Collections have been worthily continued, but each successive growth has risen in obedience to the will of one supreme authority; and that it should have ever come to be believed that twenty aldermen, whose lives are mainly spent in considering bank-rates, bimetallism, and sewage, could collect pictures of permanent value is on the face of it as wild a folly as ever tried the strength of the strait waistcoats of Hanwell or Bedlam. But as Manchester and Liverpool enjoy as fair a measure of sanity as the rest of the kingdom, we perforce must admit the theory of unconscious acceptation of a chance idea.

But I take it that what is essential in my argument is not to prove that aldermen know little about art, but that twenty men, wise or foolish, ignorant or learned, cannot edit a picture gallery. Proving the obvious is not an amusing task, but it is sometimes a necessary task. It may be thought, too, that I might be more brief; the elderly maxim about brevity being the soul of wit may be flung in my teeth. But lengthy discourse gives time for reflection, and I am seriously anxious that my readers should consider the question which these articles introduce. I believe it to be one of vital interest, reaching down a long range of consequences; and should these articles induce Manchester and Liverpool to place their galleries in the care of competent art-directors, I shall have rendered an incalculable service to English art. I say "competent art-directors," and I mean by "competent art-

directors" men who will deem their mission to be a repudiation of the Anglo-French art fostered by the Academy—a return to a truer English tradition, and the giving to Manchester and Liverpool individual artistic aspiration and tendency.

Is the ambition of Manchester and Liverpool limited to paltry imitations of the Chantrey Fund collection? If they desire no more, it would serve no purpose to disturb the corporations in their management of the galleries. The corporations can do this better than any director. But if Manchester and Liverpool desire individual artistic life, if they wish to collect art that will attract visitors and contribute to their renown, they can only do this by the appointment of competent directors. For assurance on this point we have only to think what Sir Frederick Burton has done for the National Gallery, or what the late Mr. Doyle did for Dublin on the meagre grant of one thousand a year. It is the man and not the amount of money spent that counts. A born collector like the late Mr. Doyle can do more with a thousand a year than a corporation could do with a hundred thousand a year.

Nothing is of worth except individual passion; it is the one thing that achieves. And I know of no more intense passion—and, I will add, no more beautiful passion—than the passion for collecting works of art. Of all passions it is the purest. It matters little to the man possessed of it whether he collects for the State or for himself. The gallery is his child, and all his time and energy are given to the enrichment and service of *his* gallery. The

gallery is his one thought. He will lie awake at night to better think out his plans for the capture of some treasure on which he has set his heart. He will get up in the middle of the night, and walk about the gallery, considering some project for improved arrangements. To realise the meaning of the passion for collecting, it is necessary to have known a real collector, and intimately, for collectors do not wear their hearts on their sleeve. With the indifferent they are indifferent; but they are quick to detect the one man or woman who sympathises, who understands; and they select with eagerness this one from the crowd. But perhaps the collector never really reveals himself except to a fellow-collector, and to appreciate the strength and humanity of the passion it is necessary to have seen Duret and Goncourt explaining a new Japanesery which one of them has just acquired.

The partial love which a corporation may feel for its collection is very different from the undivided strength of the collector's love of his gallery. And even if we were to admit the possibility of an ideal corporation consisting of men perfectly conversant with art, and animated with passion equal to the collector's passion, the history of its labour would still be written in the words "vexatious discussion and lost chances." The rule that no picture is to be purchased until it has been seen and approved of by the corporation forbids all extraordinary chances, and the unique and only moment is lost in foolish formulæ. The machinery is too cumbersome; and chances of sale-rooms cannot be seized; it is instinct

and not reason that decides the collector, and no dozen or twenty men can ever be got to immediately agree.

Not long after my article on Manet was published in the columns of the *Speaker*, a member of the Manchester art committee wrote asking where could the pictures be seen, and if the owners would lend them for exhibition in the annual exhibition soon to open. If they did, perhaps the corporation might be induced to buy them for the permanent collection. Now I will ask my readers to imagine my bringing the pictures "Le Linge" and "L'Enfant à l'Épée" over from France, and submitting them to the judgment of the Manchester Corporation. As well might I submit to them a Velasquez or a Gainsborough signed Smith and Jones! It is the authority of the signature that induces acquiescence in the beauty of a portrait by Gainsborough or Velasquez; without the signature the ordinary or drawing-room lady would prefer a portrait by Mr. Shannon. Mr. Shannon is the fashion, and the fashion, being the essence and soul of the crowd, is naturally popular with the crowd.

In my article on Manet I referred to a beautiful picture of his—"Boulogne Pier." It was then on exhibition in Bond Street. I asked a friend to buy it. "You will not like the picture now," I said; "but if you have any latent æsthetic feeling in you it will bring it out, and you will like it in six months' time." My friend would not buy the picture, and the reason he gave was that he did not like it. It

did not seem to occur to him that his taste might advance, and that the picture he was ignorant enough to like to-day he might be wise enough to loathe six years hence.

An early customer of Sir John Millais said, "Millais, I'll give you five hundred pounds to paint me a picture, and you shall paint me the picture you are minded to paint." Sir John painted him one of the most beautiful pictures of modern times, "St. Agnes' Eve." But the wisdom of the purchaser was only temporary. When the picture came home he did not like it, his wife did not like it; there was no colour in it; it was all blue and green. Briefly, it was not a pleasant picture to live with; and after trying the experiment for a few months this excellent gentleman decided to exchange the picture for a picture by—by whom?—by Mr. Sidney Cooper. I wonder what he thinks of himself to-day. And his fate is the fate of the aldermen who buy pictures because they like them.

The administration of art, as it was pointed out in the *Manchester Guardian*, is one of extreme difficulty, and it is not easy to find a competent director; but it seems to me to be easy to name many men who would do better in art-management than a corporation, and embarrassingly difficult to name one who would do worse. Any one man can thread a needle better than twenty men. Should the needle prove brittle and the thread rotten, the threader must resign. Though a task may be accomplished only by one man, and though all differ as to how it should be accomplished, yet,

when the task is well accomplished, an appreciative unanimity seems to prevail regarding the result. We all agree in praising Sir Frederick Burton's administration; and yet how easy it would be to cavil! Why has he not bought an Ingres, a Corot, a Courbet, a Troyon? Why has he showed such excessive partiality for squint-eyed Italian saints? Sir Frederick Burton would answer: "In collecting, like in everything else, you must choose a line. I chose to consider the National Gallery as a museum. The question is whether I have collected well or badly from this point of view." But a corporation cannot choose a line on which to collect; it can do no more than indulge in miscellaneous purchases.

RELIGIOSITY IN ART.

One Sunday morning, more than twenty years ago, I breakfasted with a great painter, who was likewise a wit, and the account he gave of a recent visit to the Doré Gallery amused me very much. On entering, he noticed that next to the door there was a high desk, so cunningly constructed both as regards height and inclination that all the discomforts of writing were removed; and the brightness of the silver ink-pot, the arrangement of the numerous pens and the order-book on the desk, all was so perfect that the fingers of the lettered and unlettered itched alike with desire of the caligraphic art. By this desk loitered a large man of bland and commanding presence. He wore a white waistcoat, and a massive gold chain, with which he toyed while watching the guileless spectators or sought with soothing voice to entice one to display his handwriting in the order-book. My friend, who was small and thin, almost succeeded in defeating the vigilance of the white-waistcoated and honey-voiced Cerberus; but at the last moment, as he was about to slip out, he was stopped, and the following dialogue ensued:—

"Sir, that is a very great picture."

"Yes, it is indeed; it is an immense picture."

"Sir, I mean great in every sense of the word."

"So do I; it is nearly as broad as it is long."

"I was alluding, sir, to the superior excellence of the picture, and not to its dimensions."

"Oh!"

"May I ask, sir, if you know what that picture represents?"

"I'm sorry, but I can't tell you."

"Then, sir, I'll tell you. That picture represents the point of culmination in the life of Christ."

"Really; may I ask who says so?"

"The dignitaries of the Church say so."

Pause, during which my friend made an ineffectual attempt to get past. The waistcoat, however, barred the way, and then the bland and dulcet voice spoke again.

"Do you see that man copying the right-hand corner of the picture? That gentleman says that the man who could paint that corner could paint anything."

"Oh! and who is that gentleman?"

"That gentleman is employed to copy in the National Gallery."

"Oh! by the State?"

"No, sir, not by the State, but he has permission to copy in the National Gallery."

"A special permission granted to him by the State?"

"No, sir, but he has permission to copy in the National Gallery."

"In fact, just as every one else has. I am really very much obliged, but I must be getting along."

"Sir, won't you put down your name for a ten-guinea proof signed by the artist?"

"I'm very sorry, but I really do not see my way to taking a ten-guinea subscription."

"Then, perhaps, you will take one at five—the same without the signature?"

"I really cannot."

"You can have a numbered proof for £2, 10s."

"No, thank you; you must excuse me."

"You can have an ordinary proof for a guinea."

"No, thank you; you must really allow me to pass."

Then in the last moment the white waistcoat, assuming a tone in which there was both despair and disdain, said—

"But you will have a year and a half before you need pay your guinea."

Who does not know this man? who has not suffered from his importunities? Twenty years ago he extolled the beauties of "Christ leaving the Prætorium"; ten years later he lauded the merits of "Christ and Diana"; to-day he is busy advising the shilling public thronging the Dowdeswell galleries to view Mr. Herbert Schmalz's *impressive* picture of "The Return from Calvary." I do not mean that the same gentleman who presided at the desk in the Doré Gallery now presides at the desk at 160 New Bond Street. The individual differs, but the type remains unaltered. The waistcoat, the desk, the pens and the silver inkstand, such paraphernalia are as inseparable from him as the hammer is from the auctioneer. All this I have on the authority of Messrs. Dowdeswell themselves. When engaging their canvasser, they offered him a small table at the end of the room. Their

ignorance of his art caused him to smile. "A table," he said, "would necessitate sitting down to write, and the great point in this business is to save the customer from all unnecessary trouble. Any other place in the room except next the door is out of the question. I must have a nice desk there, at which you can write standing up, a lamp shedding a bright glow upon the paper, a handsome silver inkstand, and a long, evenly-balanced pen. Give me these things, and leave the rest to me."

Messrs. Dowdeswell hastened to comply with these requests. I was in the gallery on Monday, and can testify to the pleasantness of the little installation, to the dexterity with which customers were led there, and to the grace with which the canvasser dipped the pen in the handsome silver inkstand. The county squire, the owner of racehorses, the undergraduate, and the Brixton spinster, are easily led by him to the commodious desk. Go and see the man, and you will be led thither likewise.

It is a matter for wonder that more artists do not devote themselves to painting religious subjects. There seems to be an almost limitless demand for work of this kind, and almost any amount of praise for it, no matter how badly it is executed. The critic dares not turn the picture into ridicule however bad it may be, for to do so would seem like turning a sacred subject into ridicule—so few distinguish between the subject and the picture. He may hardly venture to depreciate the work, for it would not seem quite right to depreciate the work of a man who had endeavoured to depict, however inade-

quately, a sacred subject. Everything is in favour of the painter of religious subjects, provided certain formalities are observed. The canvasser and the arrangements of the desk are of course the first consideration, but there are a number of minor observances, not one of which may be neglected. The gallery must be thrown into deep twilight with a vivid light from above falling full on the picture. There must be lines of chairs, arranged as if for a devout congregation; and if, in excess of these, the primary conditions of success, one of the dignitaries of the Church can be induced to accept a little excursion into the perilous fields of art criticism, all will go well with the show.

It would be unseemly for a critic to argue with a bishop concerning the merits of a religious picture—it would be irreverent, anomalous, and in execrable taste. For it must be clear to every one that the best and truest critic of a religious picture is a bishop; and it is still more clear that if the picture contains a view of Jerusalem, the one person who can speak authoritatively on the matter is the Bishop of Jerusalem. And it were indeed impossible to realise the essential nature of these truths better than Messrs. Dowdeswell have done; they have even ventured to extend the ordinary programme, and have decreed a special *matinée* in the interests of country parsons—truly an idea of genius. If a fault may be found or forged with the arrangements, it is that they did not enter into some contract with the railway authorities. But this is hypercriticism; they have done their work

well, and the *matinée*, as the order-book will testify, was a splendid success. The parsons came up from every part of the country, and as "The Return from Calvary" is the latest thing in religious art, they think themselves bound to put their names down for proofs. How could they refuse? The canvasser dipped the pen in the ink for them, and he has a knack of making a refusal seem so mean.

About Mr. Schmalz's picture I have really no particular opinion. I do not think it worse than any picture of the same kind by the late Mr. Long. Nor do I think that it can be said to be very much inferior to the religious works with which Mr. Goodall has achieved so wide a reputation. On the whole I think I prefer Mr. Goodall, though I am not certain. Here is the picture:—At the top of a flight of steps and about two-thirds of the way across the picture, to the left, so as not to interfere with the view of Jerusalem, are three figures—as Sir Augustus Harris might have set them were he attempting a theatrical representation of the scene. There is a dark man, this is St. John, and over him a woman draped in white is weeping, and behind her a woman with golden hair—the Magdalen—is likewise weeping. Two other figures are ascending the steps, but as they are low down in the picture they interfere hardly at all with the splendid view. The dark sky is streaked with Naples yellow, and the pale colour serves to render distinct the three crosses planted upon Calvary in the extreme distance.

In this world all is a question of temperament. To the æsthetic temperament Mr. Schmalz's picture

will seem hardly more beautiful or attractive than a Salvationist hymn-book; the unæsthetic temperament will, on the other hand, be profoundly moved, the subject stands out clear and distinct, and that class of mind, overlooking all artistic shortcomings, will lose itself in emotional consideration of the grandest of all the world's tragedies. That Mr. Schmalz's picture is capable of exercising a profound effect on the uneducated mind there can be no doubt. While I was there a lady walked with stately tread into the next room, and seeing there nothing more exciting than rural scenes drawn in water-colour, exclaimed, "Trees, mere trees! what are trees after having had one's soul elevated?"

That great artist Henri Monnier devoted a long life to the study and the collection of the finest examples of human stupidity, and marvellous as are some of the specimens preserved by him in his dialogues, I hardly think that he succeeded in discovering a finer gem than the phrase overheard by me in the Dowdeswell Galleries. To appreciate the sublime height, must we not know something of the miserable depth? And the study of human stupidity is refreshing and salutary; it helps us to understand ourselves, to estimate ourselves, and to force ourselves to look below the surface, and so raise our ideas out of that mire of casual thought in which we are all too prone to lie. For perfect culture, the lady I met at the Dowdeswell Galleries is as necessary as Shakespeare. Is she not equally an exhortation to be wise?

THE CAMERA IN ART.

It is certain that the introduction of Japaneseries into this country has permanently increased our sense of colour; is it therefore improbable that the invention of photography has modified, if it has not occasioned any very definite alteration in our general perception of the external world? It would be interesting to inquire into such recondite and illusive phenomena; and I am surprised that no paper on so interesting a question has appeared in any of our art journals. True, so many papers are printed in our weekly and monthly press that it is impossible for any one to know all that has been written on any one subject; but, so far as I am aware, no such paper has appeared, and the absence of such a paper is, I think, a serious deficiency in our critical literature.

It is, however, no part of my present purpose to attempt to supply this want. I pass on to consider rapidly a matter less abstruse and of more practical interest, a growing habit among artists to avail themselves of the assistance of photographs in their work. It will not be questioned that many artists of repute do use photographs to—well, to put it briefly, to save themselves trouble, expense, and, in some cases, to supplant defective education. But the influence of photography on art is so vast

a subject, so multiple, so intricate, that I may do no more here than lift the very outer fringe.

It is, however, clear to almost everybody who has thought about art at all, that the ever-changing colour and form of clouds, the complex variety (definite in its very indefiniteness) of every populous street, the evanescent delicacy of line and aërial effect that the most common and prosaic suburb presents in certain lights, are the very enchantment and despair of the artist; and likewise every one who has for any short while reflected seriously on the problem of artistic work must know that the success of every evocative rendering of the exquisite externality of crowded or empty street, of tumult or calm in cloud-land, is the fruit of daily and hourly observation—observation filtered through years of thought, and then fortified again in observation of Nature.

But such observation is the labour of a life; and he who undertakes it must be prepared to see his skin brown and blister in the shine, and feel his flesh pain him with icy chills in the biting north wind. The great landscape painters suffered for the intolerable desire of Art; they were content to forego the life of drawing-rooms and clubs, and live solitary lives in unceasing communion with Art and Nature. But artists in these days are afraid of catching cold, and impatient of long and protracted studentship. Everything must be made easy, comfortable, and expeditious; and so it comes to pass that many an artist seeks assistance from the camera. A moment, and it is done: no wet feet; no tiresome

sojourn in the country when town is full of merry festivities; and, above all, hardly any failure—that is to say, no failure that the ordinary public can detect, nor, indeed, any failure that the artist's conscience will not get used to in time.

Mr. Gregory is the most celebrated artist who is said to make habitual use of photography. Mr. Gregory has no warmer admirer than myself. His picture of "Dawn" is the most fairly famous picture of our time. But since that picture his art has declined. It has lost all the noble synthetical life which comes of long observation and gradual assimilation of Nature. His picture of a yachtsman in this year's Academy was as paltry, as "realistic" as may be.

Professor Herkomer is another well-known artist who is said to use photography. It is even said that he has his sitter photographed on to the canvas, and the photographic foundation he then covers up with those dreadful browns and ochres which seem to constitute his palette. Report credits him with this method, which it is possible he believes to be an advance on the laborious process of drawing from Nature, to which, in the absence of the ingenious instrument, the Old Masters were perforce obliged to resort. It will be said that what matter how the artists work—that it is with the result, not the method, with which we are concerned. Dismissing report from our ears, surely we must recognise all the cheap realism of the camera in Professor Herkomer's portraits; and this is certainly their characteristic, although photo-

graphy may have had nothing to do with their manufacture.

Mr. Bartlett is another artist who, it is said, makes habitual use of photographs; and surely in some of his boys bathing the photographic effects are visible enough. But although very far from possessing the accomplishments of Mr. Gregory, Mr. Bartlett has acquired some education, and can draw, when occasion requires, very well indeed from life.

Mr. Mortimer Menpes is the third artist of any notoriety that rumour has declared to be a disciple of the camera. His case is the most flagrant, for it is said that he rarely, if ever, draws from Nature, and that his entire work is done from photographs. Be this as it may, his friends have stated a hundred times in the Press that he uses photography, and it would seem that his work shows the mechanical aid more and more every day. Some years ago he went to Japan, and brought home a number of pictures which suited drawing-rooms, and were soon sold. I did not see the exhibition, but I saw some pictures done by him at that time—one, an especially good one, I happened upon in the Grosvenor Gallery. This picture, although superficial and betraying when you looked into it a radical want of knowledge, was not lacking in charm. In French studios there is a slang phrase which expresses the meretricious charm of this picture—*c'est du chic;* and the meaning of this very expressive term is ignorance affecting airs of capacity. Now the whole of Mr. Menpes' picture was comprised in this term. The manner of the master who, certain of the shape and value of the shadow under an eye,

will let his hand run, was reproduced; but the exact shape and value of the shadows were not to be gathered from the photograph, and the result was a charming but a hollow mockery.

And then the "colour-notes"; with what assurance they were dashed into the little pictures from Japan, and how dexterously the touch of the master who knows exactly what he wants was parodied! At the first glance you were deceived; at the second you saw that it was only such cursive taste and knowledge as a skilful photographer who had been allowed the run of a painter's studio for a few months might display. Nowhere was there any definite intention; it was something that had been well committed to memory, that had been well remembered, but only half-understood. Everything floated—drawing, values, colours—for there was not sufficient knowledge to hold and determine the place of any one.

Since those days Mr. Menpes has continued to draw from photographs, and—the base of his artistic education being deficient from the first—the result of his long abstention from Nature is apparent, even to the least critical, in the some hundred and seventy paintings, etchings, and what he calls diamond-points on ivory, on exhibition at Messrs. Dowdeswell's. Diamond-points on ivory may astonish the unthinking public, but artists are interested in the drawing, and not what the drawing is done upon. Besides the diamond-points, there is quite sufficient matter in this exhibition to astonish visitors from Peckham, Pentonville, Islington, and perhaps

Clapham, but not Bayswater—no, not Bayswater. There are frames in every sort of pattern—some are even adorned with gold tassels—and the walls have been especially prepared to receive them.

These pictures and etchings purport to be representations of India, Burma, and Cashmire. The diamond-points, I believe, purport to be diamond-points. In some of the etchings there is the same ingenious touch of hand, but anything more woful than the oil pictures cannot easily be imagined. In truth, they do not call for any serious criticism; and were it not for the fact that they afforded an opportunity of making some remarks—which seemed to me to be worth making—about the influence of photography in modern art, I should have left the public to find for itself the value of this attempt, in the grandiloquent words of the catalogue, "to bring before my countrymen the æsthetic and artistic capabilities, and the beauty in various forms, that are to be found in our great Indian Empire." To criticise the pictures in detail is impossible; but I will try to give an impression of the exhibition as a whole. Imagine a room hung with ordinary school slates, imagine that all these slates have been gilt, and that some have been adorned with gold tassels instead of the usual sponge, and into each let there be introduced a dome, a camel, a palm-tree, or any other conventional sign of the East.

On examining the paintings thus sumptuously encased you will notice that the painter has not been able to affect with the brush any slight air of

capacity; the material betrays him at every point. The etchings are *du chic;* but the paintings are merely abortive. The handling consists in scrubbing the colour into the canvas, attaining in this manner a texture which sometimes reminds you of wool, sometimes of sand, sometimes of both. The poor little bits of blue sky stick to the houses; there is nowhere a breath of air, a ray of light, not even a conventionally graduated sky or distance; there is not an angle, or a pillar, or a stairway finely observed; there is not even any such eagerness in the delineation of an object as would show that the painter felt interest in his work; every sketch tells the tale of a burden taken up and thankfully relinquished. Here we have white wall, but it has neither depth nor consistency; behind it a bit of sandy sky; the ground is yellow, and there is a violet shadow upon it. But the colour of the ground does not show through the shadow. Look, for example, at No. 36. Is it possible to believe that that red-brick sky was painted from Nature, or that unhappy palm in a picture close by was copied as it raised its head over that wall? The real scene would have stirred an emotion in the heart of the dullest member of the Stock Exchange, and, however unskilful the brushwork, if the man could hold a brush at all, there would have been something to show that the man had been in the presence of Nature. There is no art so indiscreet as painting, and the story of the painter's mind may be read in every picture.

But another word regarding these pictures would be waste of space and time. Let Mr. Menpes put

away his camera, let him go out into the streets or the fields, and there let him lose himself in the vastness and beauty of Nature. Let him study humbly the hang of a branch or the surface of a wall, striving to give to each their character. Let him try to render the mystery of a perspective in the blue evening or its harshness and violence in the early dawn. There is no need to go to Burma, there is mystery and poetry wherever there is atmosphere. In certain moments a backyard, with its pump and a child leaning to drink, will furnish sufficient motive for an exquisite picture; the atmosphere of the evening hour will endow it with melancholy and tenderness. But the insinuating poetry of chiaroscuro the camera is powerless to reproduce, and it cannot be imagined; Nature is parsimonious of this her greatest gift, surrendering it slowly, and only to those who love her best, and whose hearts are pure of mercenary thought.

THE NEW ENGLISH ART CLUB.

THIS, the ninth season of the New English Art Club, has been marked by a decisive step. The club has rejected two portraits of Mr. Shannon. So that the public may understand and appreciate the importance of this step, I will sketch, *à coups de crayon peu fondus*, the portrait of a lady as I imagine Mr. Shannon might have painted her. A woman of thirty, an oval face, and a long white brow; pale brown hair, tastefully arranged with flowers and a small plume. The eyes large and tender, expressive of a soul that yearns and has been misunderstood. The nose straight, the nostrils well-defined, slightly dilated; the mouth curled, and very red. The shoulders large, white, and over-modelled, with cream tints; the arms soft and rounded; diamond bracelets on the wrists; diamonds on the emotional neck. Her dress is of the finest duchesse satin, and it falls in heavy folds. She holds a bouquet in her hands; a pale green garden is behind her; swans are moving gracefully through shadowy water, whereon the moon shines peacefully. Add to this conception the marvellous square brushwork of the French studio, and you have the man born to paint English duchesses—to paint them as they see themselves, as they would be

seen by posterity; and through Mr. Shannon our duchesses realise all their aspirations, present and posthumous. The popularity of these pictures is undoubted; wherever they hang, and they hang everywhere, except in the New English Art Club, couples linger. "How charming, how beautifully dressed, how refined she looks!" and the wife who has not married a man *à la hauteur de ses sentiments* casts on him a withering glance, which says, "Why can't you afford to let me be painted by Mr. Shannon?"

We are here to realise our ideals, and far is it from my desire to thwart any lady in her aspirations, be they in white or violet satin, with or without green gardens. If I were on the hanging committee of the Royal Academy, all the duchesses in the kingdom should be realised, and then—I would create more duchesses, and they, too, should be realised by Messrs. Shannon, Hacker, and Solomon *les chefs de rayon de la peinture.* And when these painters arrived, each with a van filled with new satin duchesses, I would say, "Go to Mr. Agnew, ask him what space he requires, and anything over and above they shall have it." I would convert the Chantrey Fund into white satin duchesses, and build a museum opposite Mr. Tate's for the blue. I would do anything for these painters and their duchesses except hang them in the New English Art Club.

For it is entirely necessary that the public should never be left for a moment in doubt as to the intention of this club. It is open to those who paint for the joy of painting; and it is entirely disassociated

from all commercialism. Muslin ballet-girl or satin duchess it matters no jot, nothing counts with the jury but *l'idée plastique:* comradeship, money gain or loss, are waived. The rejection of Mr. Shannon's portraits will probably cost the club four guineas a year, the amount of his subscription, and it will certainly lose to the club the visits of his numerous drawing-room following. This is to be regretted—in a way. The club must pay its expenses, but it were better that the club should cease than that its guiding principle should be infringed.

Either we may or we may not have a gallery from which popular painting is excluded. I think that we should; but I know that Academicians and dealers are in favour of enforced prostitution in art. That men should practise painting for the mere love of paint is wholly repugnant to every healthy-minded Philistine. The critic of the *Daily Telegraph* described the pictures in the present exhibition as things that no one would wish to possess; he then pointed out that a great many were excellently well painted. Quite so. I have always maintained that there is nothing that the average Englishman—the reader of the *Daily Telegraph*—dislikes so much as good painting. He regards it in the light of an offence, and what makes it peculiarly irritating in his eyes is the difficulty of declaring it to be an immoral action; he instinctively feels that it is immoral, but somehow the crime seems to elude definition.

The Independent Theatre was another humble endeavour which sorely tried the conscience of the

average Englishman. That any one should wish to write plays that were not intended to please the public—that did not pay—was an unheard-of desire, morbid and unwholesome as could well be, and meriting the severest rebuke. But the Independent Theatre has somehow managed to struggle into a third year of life, and the New English Art Club has opened its ninth exhibition; so I suppose that the *Daily Telegraph* will have to make up its mind, sorrowfully, of course, and with regret, that there are folk still in London who are not always ready to sell their talents to the highest bidder.

For painters and those who like painting, the exhibitions at the New English Art Club are the most interesting in London. We find there no anecdotes, sentimental, religious, or historical, nor the conventional measuring and modelling which the Academy delights to honour in the name of Art. At the New English Art Club, from the first picture to the last, we find artistic effort; very often the effort is feeble, but nowhere, try as persistently as you please, will you find the loud stupidity of ordinary exhibitions of contemporary painting. This is a plain statement of a plain truth—plain to artists and those few who possess the slightest knowledge of the art of painting, or even any faint love of it. But to the uncultivated, to the ignorant, and to the stupid the New English Art Club is the very place where all the absurd and abortive attempts done in painting in the course of the year are exposed on view. If I wished to test a man's taste and knowledge in the art of painting I would take him to the English Art Club

and listen for one or two minutes to what he had got to say.

Immediately on entering the room, before we see the pictures, we know that they are good. For a pleasant soft colour, delicate and insinuating as an odour of flowers, pervades the room. So we are glad to loiter in this vague sensation of delicate colour, and we talk to our friends, avoiding the pictures, until gradually a pale-faced woman with arched eyebrows draws our eyes and fixes our thoughts. It is a portrait by Mr. Sargent, one of the best he has painted. By the side of a fine Hals it might look small and thin, but nothing short of a fine Hals would affect its real beauty. My admiration for Mr. Sargent has often hesitated, but this picture completely wins me. It has all the qualities of Mr. Sargent's best work; and it has something more: it is painted with that measure of calculation and reserve which is present in all work of the first order of merit. I find the picture described with sufficient succinctness in my notes: "A half-length portrait of a woman, in a dress of shot-silk—a sort of red violet, the colour known as puce. The face is pale, the chin is prominent and pointed. There were some Japanese characteristics in the model, and these have been selected. The eyes are long, and their look is aslant; the eyebrows are high and marked; the dark hair grows round the pale forehead with wig-like abruptness, and the painter has attempted no attenuation. The carnations are wanting in depth of colour—they are somewhat chalky; but what I admire so much is the exquisite selection, besides the points mentioned

—the shadowed outline, so full of the form of her face, and the markings about the eyes, so like her; and the rendering is full of the beauty of incomparable skill. The neck, how well placed beneath the pointed chin! How exact in width, in length, and how it corresponds with the ear; and the jawbone is under the skin; and the anatomies are all explicit—the collar-bone, the hollow of the arm-pit, and the muscle of the arm, the placing of the bosom, its shape, its size, its weight. Mr. Sargent's drawing speaks without hesitation, a beautiful, decisive eloquence, the meaning never in excess of the expression, nor is the expression ever redundant."

I said that we find in this portrait reserve not frequently to be met with in Mr. Sargent's work. What I first noticed in the picture was the admirable treatment of the hands. They are upon her hips, the palms turned out, and so reduced is the tone that they are hardly distinguishable from the dress. As the model sat the light must have often fallen on her hands, and five years ago Mr. Sargent might have painted them in the light. But the portrait tells us that he has learnt the last and most difficult lesson—how to omit. Any touch of light on those hands would rupture the totality and jeopardise the colour-harmony, rare without suspicion of exaggeration or affectation. In the background a beautiful chocolate balances and enforces the various shades of the shot-silk, and with severity that is fortunate. By aid of two red poppies, worn in the bodice, a final note in the chord is reached—a resonant and closing consonance; a beautiful work, certainly: I should call it

a perfect work were it not that the drawing is a little too obvious: in places we can detect the manner; it does not *coule de source* like the drawing of the very great masters.

Except Mr. Sargent, no one in the New English Art Club comes forward with a clearly formulated style; everything is more or less tentative, and I cannot entirely exempt from this criticism either Mr. Steer, Mr. Clausen, or Mr. Walter Sickert. But this criticism must not be understood as a reproach—surely this green field growing is more pleasing than the Academy's barren stubble. I claim no more for the New English Art Club than that it is the growing field. Say that the crop looks thin, and that the yield will prove below the average, but do not deny that what harvest there may be the New English Art Club will bring home. So let us walk round this May field of the young generation and look into its future, though we know that the summer months will disprove for better or for worse.

Mr. Bernard Sickert, the youngest member of this club, a mere beginner, a five- or six-year-old painter, has made, from exhibition to exhibition, constant and consistent progress, and this year he comes forward with two landscapes, both seemingly conclusive of a true originality of vision, and there is a certain ease of accomplishment in his work which tempts me to believe that a future is in store for him. The differences of style in these two pictures do not affect my opinion, for, on looking into the pictures, the differences are more apparent than real—the palette has been composed differently, but neither picture

tells of any desire of a new outlook, or even to radically change his mode of expression. The eye which observed and remembered so sympathetically "A Spring Evening," over which a red moon rose like an apparition, observed also the masts and the prows, and the blue sea gay with the life of passing sail and flag, and the green embaying land overlooking "A Regatta."

I hardly know which picture I prefer. I saw first "A Regatta," and was struck by the beautiful drawing and painting of the line of boats, their noses thrust right up into the fore water of the picture, a little squadron advancing. So well are these boats drawn that the unusual perspective (the picture was probably painted from a window) does not interrupt for a second our enjoyment. A jetty on the right stretches into the blue sea water, intense with signs of life, and the little white sails glint in the blue bay, and behind the high green hill the colours of a faintly-tinted evening fade slowly. The picture is strangely complete, and it would be difficult to divine any reason for disliking it, even amongst the most ignorant. "A Spring Evening" is neither so striking nor so immediately attractive; its charm is none the less real. An insinuating and gentle picture, whose delicacy and simplicity I like.

The painter has caught that passing and pathetic shudder of coming life which takes the end of a March day before the bud swells or a nest appears. The faint chill twilight floats upon the field, and the red moon mounts above the scrub-clad hill-

side into a rich grey sky, beautifully graduated and full of the glamour of waning and strengthening light. The slope of the field, too—it is there the sheep are folded—is in admirable perspective. On the left, beyond the hurdles, is a strip of green, perhaps a little out of tone, though I know such colour persists even in very receding lights; and high up on the right the blue night is beginning to show. The sheep are folded in a turnip field, and the root-crop is being eaten down.

The month is surely March, for the lambs are still long-legged—there one has dropped on its knees and is digging at the udder of the passive ewe with that ferocious little gluttony which we know so well; another lamb relieves its ear's first itching with its hind hoof—you know the grotesque movement—and the field is full of the weird roaming of animal life, the pathos of the unconscious, the pity of transitory light. A little umber and sienna, a rich grey, not a bit of drawing anywhere, and still the wandering forms of sheep and lambs fully expressed, one sheep even in its particular physiognomy. Truly a charming picture, spontaneous and simple, and proving a painter possessed of a natural sentiment, of values, and willing to employ that now most neglected method of pictorial expression, chiaro-scuro.

Neglected by Mr. Steer, who seems prepared to dispense with what is known as *une atmosphère de tableau*. Any one of his three pictures will serve as an example. His portrait of a girl in blue I cannot praise, not because I do not admire it, but because

Mr. MacColl, the art critic of the *Spectator*, our ablest art critic, himself a painter and a painter of talent, has declared it to be superior to a Romney. I will quote his words: "The word masterpiece is not to be lightly used, but when we stand before this picture it is difficult to think of any collection in which it would look amiss, or fail to hold its own. If we talk of English masters, Romney is the name that most naturally suggests itself, because in the bright clear face and brown hair and large simplicity of presentment, there is a good deal to recall that painter. But Romney's colour would look cheap beside this, and his drawing conventional in observation, however big in style."

To go one better than this, I should have to say the picture was as good as Velasquez, and to simply endorse Mr. MacColl's words would be a second-hand sort of criticism to which I am not accustomed. Besides, to do so would be to express nothing of my own personal sensations in regard to this picture. So I will say at once that I do not understand the introduction of Romney's name into the argument. If comparison there must be, surely Mr. Watts would furnish one more appropriate. Both in the seeing and in the execution the portrait seems nearer to Mr. Watts than to Romney. Of Romney's gaiety there is no trace in Mr. Steer's picture.

The girl sits in a light wooden arm-chair—her arm stretched in front of her, the hands held between her knees—looking out of the picture somewhat stolidly. The Lady Hamilton mood was an

exaggerated mood, but there is something of it in every portrait at all characteristic of our great eighteenth-century artist. The portrait exhibited in this year's show of Old Masters in the Academy will do—the lady who walks forward, her hands held in front of her bosom, the fingers pressed together, the white dress floating from the hips, the white brought down with a yellow glaze. I do not think that we find either that gaiety or those glazes in Mr. Steer. From many a Romney the cleaner has removed an outer skin, but I am not speaking of those pictures.

But if I see very little Romney in Steer's picture, I am thankful that I see at least very rare distinction in the figuration of a beautiful and decorative ideal—a girl in blue sitting with her back to an open window, full of the blue night, and on the other side the grey blind, yellowing slightly under the glare of the lamp. I appreciate the very remarkable and beautiful compromise between portrait-painting and decoration. I see rare distinction (we must not be afraid of the word distinction in speaking of Mr. Steer) in his choice of what to draw. The colour scheme is well maintained, somewhat in the manner of Mr. Watts, but neither the blue of the dress nor the blue of the night is intrinsically beautiful, and we have only to think of the blues that Whistler or Manet would have found to understand how deficient they are.

The drawing of the face is neither a synthesis, nor is it intimately characteristic of the model: it is simply rudimentary. A round girlish face with a curled mouth and an ugly shadow which does not express the nose. The shoulders are there, that we are told, but the anato-

mies are wanting, and the body is without its natural thickness. Nor is the drawing more explicit in its exterior lines than it is in its inner. There is hardly an arm in that sleeve; the elbow would be difficult to find, and the construction of the waist and hips is uncertain; the drawing does not speak like Mr. Sargent's. Look across the room at his portrait of a lady in white satin and you will see there a shadow, so exact, so precise, so well understood, that the width of the body is placed beyond doubt.

But the most radical fault in the portrait I have yet to point out; it is lacking in atmosphere. There is none between us and the girl, hardly any between the girl's head and the wall. The lamp-light effect is conveyed by what Mr. MacColl would perhaps call a symbol, by the shadow of the girl's head. We look in vain for transparent darknesses, lights surrounded by shadows, transposition of tones, and the aspect of things; the girl sits in a full diffused light, and were it not for the shadow on the wall and the shadow cast by the nose, she might be sitting in a conservatory. Speaking of another picture by Mr. Steer, "Boulogne Sands," Mr. MacColl says: "The children playing, the holiday encampment of the bathers' tents, the glint of people flaunting themselves like flags, the dazzle of sand and sea, and over and through it all the chattering lights of noon." I seize upon the phrase, "The people flaunting themselves like flags." The simile is a pretty one, and what suggested it to the writer is the detached colour in the picture; and the colours are detached because there is no atmo-

sphere to bind them together; there are no attenuations, transpositions of tone—in a word, none of those combinations of light and shade which make *une atmosphère de tableau.*

And Mr. Steer's picture is merely an instance of a general tendency which for the last twenty years has widened the gulf between modern and ancient painting. It was Manet who first suggested *la peinture claire*, and his suggestion has been developed by Roll, Monet, and others, until oil-painting has become little more than a sheet of white paper slightly tinted. Values have been diverted from their original mission, which was to build up *une atmosphère de tableau*, and now every value and colour finely observed seem to have for mission the abolition of chiaroscuro. Without atmosphere painting becomes a mosaic, and Mr. MacColl seems prepared to defend this return to archaic formulæ. This is what he says: "The sky of the sea-beach, for example, if it be taken as representing form and texture, is ridiculous; it is like something rough and chippy, and if the suggestion gets too much in the way the method has overshot its mark. Its mark is to express by a symbol the vivid life in the sky-colour, the sea-colour, and the sand-colour, and it is doubtful if the richness and subtlety of those colours can be conveyed in any other way." Here I fail altogether to understand. If the sky's beauty can be expressed by a symbol, why cannot the beauty of men and women be expressed in the same way? How the infinities of aërial perspective can be expressed by a symbol, I have no slightest notion; nor do I think that Mr. MacColl has. In striving to

excuse deficiencies in a painter whose very real and loyal talent we both admire, he has allowed his pen to run into dangerous sophistries. "The matter of handling," he continues, "is then a moot point—a question of temperament." Is this so?

That some men are born with a special aptitude for handling colour as other men are born with a special sense of proportions is undeniable; but Mr. MacColl's thought goes further than this barren platitude, and if he means, as I think he does, that the faculty of handling is more instinctive than that of drawing, I should like to point out to him that handling did not become a merely personal caprice until the present century. A collection of ancient pictures does not present such endless experimentation with the material as a collection of modern pictures. Rubens, Hals, Velasquez, and Gainsborough do not contradict each other so violently regarding their use of the material as do Watts, Leighton, Millais, and Orchardson.

In the nineteenth century no one has made such beautiful use of the material as Manet and Whistler, and we find these two painters using it respectively exactly like Hals and Velasquez. It would therefore seem that those who excel in the use of paint are agreed as to the handling of it, just as all good dancers are agreed as to the step. But, though all good dancers dance the same step, each brings into his practice of it an individuality of movement and sense of rhythm sufficient to prevent it from becoming mechanical. The ancient painters relied on differences of feeling and seeing for originality

rather than on eccentric handling of colour; and all these extraordinary executions which we meet in every exhibition of modern pictures are in truth no more than frantic efforts either to escape from the thraldom of a bad primary education, or attempts to disguise ignorance in fantastic formulæ. That which cannot be referred back to the classics is not right, and I at least know not where to look among the acknowledged masters for justification for Mr. Steer's jagged brushwork.

Mr. Walter Sickert, whose temperament is more irresponsible, is nevertheless content within the traditions of oil-painting. He exhibits two portraits, both very clever and neither satisfactory, for neither are carried beyond the salient lines of character. Nature has gifted Mr. Sickert with a keen hatred of the commonplace; his vision of life is at once complex and fragmentary, his command on drawing slow and uncertain, his rendering therefore as spasmodic as a poem by Browning. He picks up the connecting links with difficulty, and even his most complete work is full of omissions. The defect—for it is a defect—is by no means so fatal in the art-value of a painting as the futile explanations so dearly beloved by the ignorant. Manet was to the end the victim of man's natural dislike of ellipses, and Mr. Walter Sickert is suffering the same fate. Still, even the most remote intelligence should be able to gather something of the merit of the portrait of Miss Minnie Cunningham. How well she is in that long red frock—a vermilion silhouette on a rich brown background! I should be still more pleased if the vermilion had been slightly

broken with yellow ochre; but then, at heart, I am no more than *un vieux classique.* The edges of the vermilion hat are lightened where it receives the glare of the foot-lights; and the face does not suffer from the red. It is as light, as pretty, as suggestive as may be. The thinness of the hand and wrist is well insisted upon, and the trip of the legs, just before she turns, realises, and in a manner I have not seen elsewhere, the enigma of the artificial life of the stage.

The æstheticism of the Glasgow school, of which we have heard so much lately, is identical with that of the New English Art Club, and the two societies are in a measure affiliated. Nearly all the members of the Glasgow school are members of the New English Art Club, and it is regrettable that they do not unite and give us an exhibition that would fairly stare the Academy out of countenance. Among the Glasgow painters the most prominent and valid talent is Mr. Guthrie's. His achievements are more considerable and more personal; and he seems to approach very near to a full expression of the pictorial aspirations of his generation. Years ago his name was made known to me by a portrait of singular beauty; an oasis it was in a barren and bitter desert of Salon pictures. Since then he has adopted a different and better method of painting; and an excellent example of his present style is his portrait of Miss Spencer, a lady in a mauve gown. The slightness of the intention may be urged against the picture; it is no more than a charming decoration faintly flushed with life. But in his management of the mauve Mr. Guthrie achieved quite a little

triumph: and the foreground, which is a very thin grey passed over a dark ground, is delicious, and the placing of the signature is in the right place. Most artists sign their pictures in the same place. But the signature should take a different place in every picture, for in every picture there is one and only one right place for the signature; and the true artist never fails to find the place which his work has chosen and consecrated for his name.

I confess myself to be a natural and instinctive admirer of Mr. Guthrie's talent. His picture, "Midsummer," exhibited at Liverpool, charmed me. Turning to my notes I find this description of it: "A garden in the summer's very moment of complete efflorescence; a bower of limpid green, here and there interwoven with red flowers. And three ladies are there with their tiny Japanese tea-table. One dress—that on the left—is white, like a lily, drenched with green shadows; the dress on the right is a purple, beautiful as the depth of foxglove bells. A delicate and yet a full sensation of the beauty of modern life, from which all grossness has been omitted—a picture for which I think Corot would have had a good word to say." In the same exhibition there was a pastel by Mr. Guthrie, which quite enchanted me with its natural, almost naïve, grace. Turning to my notes I extract the following lines: "A lady seated on a light chair, her body in profile, her face turned towards the spectator; she wears a dress with red stripes. One hand hanging by her side, the other hand holding open a flame-coloured fan; and it is this that makes the picture. The

feet laid one over the other. The face, a mere indication; and for the hair, charcoal, rubbed and then heightened by two or three touches of the rich black of pastel-chalk. A delicate, a precious thing, rich in memories of Watteau and Whistler, of boudoir inspiration, and whose destination is clearly the sitting-room of a dilettante bachelor."

Mr. Henry, another prominent member of the Glasgow school, exhibited a portrait of a lady in a straw hat—a rich and beautiful piece of painting, somewhat "made up" and over-modelled, still a piece of painting that one would like to possess. Mr. Hornell's celebrated "Midsummer," the detestation of aldermen, was there too. Imagine the picture cards, the ten of diamonds, and the eight of hearts shuffled rapidly upon a table covered with a Persian table-cloth. To ignore what are known as values seems to be the first principle of the Glasgow school. Hence a crude and discordant coloration without depth or richness. Hence an absence of light and the mystery of aërial perspective. But I have spoken very fully on this subject elsewhere.

Fifteen years ago it was customary to speak slightingly of the Old Masters, and it was thought that their mistakes could be easily rectified. Their dark skies and black foregrounds hold their own against all Monet's cleverness; and it has begun to be suspected that even if nature be industriously and accurately copied in the fields, the result is not always a picture. The palette gives the value of the grass and of the trees, but, alas, not of the sky—the sky is higher in tone than the palette can go; the painter there-

fore gets a false value. Hence the tendency among the *plein airists* to leave out the sky or to do with as little sky as possible. A little reef is sufficient to bring about a great shipwreck; a generation has wasted half its life, and the Old Masters are again becoming the fashion. Mr. Furse seems to be deeply impressed with the truth of the *new* æstheticism. And he has succeeded within the limits of a tiny panel, a slight but charming intention. "The Great Cloud" rolls over a strip of lowland, lowering in a vast imperial whiteness, vague and shadowy as sleep or death. Ruysdael would have stopped for a moment to watch it. But its lyrical lilt would trouble a mind that could only think in prose; Shelley would like it better, and most certainly it would not fail to recall to his mind his own immortal verses—

> "I am the daughter of earth and water,
> And the nursling of the sky;
> I pass through the pores of ocean and shores,
> I change, but I cannot die."

What will become of our young artists and their aspirations is a tale that time will unfold gradually, and for the larger part of its surprises we shall have to wait ten years. In ten years many of these æsthetes will have become common Academicians, working for the villas and perambulators of numerous families. Many will have disappeared for ever, some may be resurrected two generations hence, may be raised from the dead like Mr. Brabazon, our modern Lazarus—

> "Lazare allait mourir une seconde fois,"—

or perchance to sleep for ever in Sir Joshua's bosom. That a place will be found there for Mr. Brabazon is one of the articles of faith of the younger generation. Mr. Brabazon is described as an amateur, and the epithet is marvellously appropriate; no one—not even the great masters—deserved it better. The love of a long life is in those water-colours—they are all love; out of love they have grown, in its light they have flourished, and they have been made lovely with love.

In a time of slushy David Coxes, Mr Brabazon's eyes were strangely his own. Even then he saw Nature hardly explained at all—films of flowing colour transparent as rose-leaves, the lake's blue, and the white clouds curling above the line of hills—a sense of colour and a sense of distance, that was all, and he had the genius to remain within the limitations of his nature. And, with the persistency of true genius, Mr. Brabazon painted, with a flowing brush, rose-leaf water-colours, unmindful of the long indifference of two generations, until it happened that the present generation, with its love of slight things, came upon this undiscovered genius. It has hailed him as master, and has dragged him into the popularity of a special exhibition of his work at the Goupil Galleries. And it was inevitable that the present young men should discover Mr. Brabazon: for in discovering him, they were discovering themselves—his art is no more than a curious anticipation of the artistic ideal of to-day.

The sketch he exhibits at the New English Art Club is a singularly beautiful tint of rose, spread with delicate grace over the paper. A little less, and

there would be nothing; but a little beauty has always seemed to me preferable to a great deal of ugliness. And what is true about one is true about nearly all his drawings. We find in them always an harmonious colour contrast, and very rarely anything more. Sometimes there are those evanescent gradations of colour which are the lordship and signature of the colourist, and when *le ton local* is carried through the picture, through the deepest shadows as through the highest lights, when we find it persisting everywhere, as we do in No. 19, "Lake Maggiore," we feel in our souls the joy that comes of perfect beauty. But too frequently Mr. Brabazon's colour is restricted to an effective contrast; he often skips a great many notes, touching the extremes of the octave with certainty and with grace.

But it is right that we should make a little fuss over Mr. Brabazon; for though this work is slight, it is an accomplishment—he has indubitably achieved a something, however little that something may be; and when art is disappearing in the destroying waters of civilisation, we may catch at straws. Beyond colour—and even in colour his limitations are marked—Mr. Brabazon cannot go. He entered St. Mark's, and of the delicacy of ornamentation, of the balance of the architecture, he saw nothing; neither the tracery of carven column nor the aërial perspective of the groined arches. It was his genius not to see these things—to leave out the drawing is better than to fumble with it, and all his life he has done this; and though we may say that a water-colour with the drawing left out is a very slight thing, we cannot fail to perceive that these

sketches, though less than sonnets or ballades, or even rondeaus or rondels—at most they are triolets—are akin to the masters, however distant the relationship.

I have not told you about the very serious progress that Mr. George Thompson has made since the last exhibition; I have not described his two admirable pictures; nor mentioned Mr. Linder's landscape, nor Mr. Buxton Knight's "Haymaking Meadows," nor Mr. Christie's pretty picture "A May's Frolic," nor Mr. MacColl's "Donkey Race." I have omitted much that it would have been a pleasure to praise; for my intention was not to write a guide to the exhibition, but to interpret some of the characteristics of the young generation.

The New English Art Club is very typical of this end of the century. It is young, it is interesting, it is intelligent, it is emotional, it is cosmopolitan—not the Bouillon Duval cosmopolitanism of the Newlyn School, but rather an agreeable assimilation of the Montmartre café of fifteen years ago. Art has fallen in France, and the New English seems to me like a seed blown over-sea from a ruined garden. It has caught English root, and already English colour and fragrance are in the flower. A frail flower; but, frail or strong, it is all we have of art in the present generation. It is slight, and so most typical; for, surely, no age was ever so slight in its art as ours? As the century runs on it becomes more and more slight and more and more intelligent. A sheet of Whatman's faintly flushed with a rose-tint, a few stray verses characterised with a few imperfect rhymes and a wrong accent, are sufficient foundation

for two considerable reputations. The education of the younger generation is marvellous; its brains are excellent; it seems to be lacking in nothing except guts. As education spreads guts disappear, and that is the most serious word I have to say.

Without thinking of those great times when men lived in the giddiness and the exultation of a constant creation—when a day was sufficient for Rubens to paint the "Kermesse," thirteen days to paint the "Mages," seven or eight to paint the "Communion de St. François d'Assise"—and blotting from our mind the fabulous production of Tintoretto and Veronese, let us merely remember that thirty years ago Millais painted a beautiful picture every year until marriage and its consequences brought his art to a sudden close. One year it was "Autumn Leaves," the following year it was "St. Agnes' Eve," and behind these pictures there were at least ten masterpieces—"The Orchard," "The Rainbow," "Mariana in the Moated Grange," "Ophelia," etc. Millais is far behind Veronese and Tintoretto in magnificent excellence and extraordinary rapidity of production; but is not the New English Art Club even as far behind the excellence and fertility of production of thirty years ago?

A GREAT ARTIST.

We have heard the words "great artist" used so often and so carelessly that their tremendous significance escapes. The present is a time when it is necessary to consider the meaning, latent and manifest, of the words, for we are about to look on the drawings of the late Charles Keene.

In many the words evoke the idea of huge canvases in which historical incidents are depicted, conquerors on black horses covered with gold trappings, or else figures of Christ, or else the agonies of martyrs. The portrayal of angels is considered by the populace to be especially imaginative, and all who affect such subjects are at least in their day termed great artists. But the words are capable of a less vulgar interpretation. To the select few the great artist is he who is most racy of his native soil, he who has most persistently cultivated his talent in one direction, and in one direction only, he who has repeated himself most often, he who has lived upon himself the most avidly. In art, eclecticism means loss of character, and character is everything in art. I do not mean by character personal idiosyncrasies; I mean racial and territorial characteristics. Of personal idiosyncrasy we have enough and to spare. Indeed, it has come to be accepted almost as an

axiom that it does not matter much how badly you paint, provided you do not paint badly like anybody else. But instead of noisy idiosyncrasy we want the calm of national character in our art. A national character can only be acquired by remaining at home and saturating ourselves in the spirit of our land until it oozes from our pens and pencils in every slightest word, in every slightest touch. Our lives should be one long sacrifice for this one thing—national character. Foreign travel should be eschewed, we should turn our eyes from Paris and Rome and fix them on our own fields; we should strive to remain ignorant, making our lives mole-like, burrowing only in our own parish soil. There are no universities in art, but there are village schools; each of us should choose his master, imitate him humbly, striving to continue the tradition. And while labouring thus humbly, rather as handicraftsmen than as artists, our personality will gradually begin to appear in our work, not the weak febrile idiosyncrasy which lights a few hours of the artist's youth, but a steady flame nourished by the rich oil of excellent lessons. If the work is good, very little personality is required. Are the individual temperaments of Terburg, Metzu, and Peter de Hoogh very strikingly exhibited in their pictures?

The paragraph I have just written will seem like a digression to the careless reader, but he who has read carefully, or will take the trouble to glance back, will not fail to see, that although in appearance digressive, it is a strict and accurate comment on Charles Keene, and the circumstances in which his art was produced.

Charles Keene never sought after originality; on the contrary, he began by humbly imitating John Leech, the inventor of the method. His earliest drawings (few if any of them are exhibited in the present collection) were hardly distinguishable from Leech's. He continued the tradition humbly, and originality stole upon him unawares. Charles Keene was not an erudite, he thought of very little except his own talent and the various aspects of English life which he had the power of depicting; but he knew thoroughly well the capacities of his talent, the direction in which it could be developed, and his whole life was devoted to its cultivation. He affected neither a knowledge of literature nor of Continental art; he lived in England and for England, content to tell the story of his own country and the age he lived in; in a word, he worked and lived as did the Dutchmen of 1630. He lived pure of all foreign influence; no man's art was ever so purely English as Keene's; even the great Dutchmen themselves were not more Dutch than Keene was English, and the result is often hardly less surprising. To look at some of these drawings and not think of the Dutchmen is impossible, for when we are most English we are most Dutch—our art came from Holland. These drawings are Dutch in the strange simplicity and directness of intention; they are Dutch in their oblivion to all interests except those of good drawing; they are Dutch in the beautiful quality of the workmanship. Examine the rich, simple drawing of that long coat or the side of that cab, and say if there is not something of the quality of a Terburg. Terburg is simple

as a page of seventeenth-century prose; and in Keene there is the same deep, rich, classic simplicity. The material is different, but the feeling is the same. I might, of course, say Jan Steen; and is it not certain that both Terburg and Steen, working under the same conditions, would not have produced drawings very like Keene's? And now, looking through the material deep into the heart of the thing, is it a paradox to say that No. 221 is in feeling and quality of workmanship a Dutch picture of the best time? The scene depicted is the honeymoon. The young wife sits by an open window full of sunlight, and the curtains likewise are drenched in the pure white light. How tranquil she is, how passive in her beautiful animal life! No complex passion stirs in that flesh; instinct drowses in her just as in an animal. With what animal passivity she looks up in her husband's face! Look at that peaceful face, that high forehead, how clearly conceived and how complete is the rendering! How slight the means, how extraordinary the result! The sunlight floods the sweet face so exquisitively stupid, and her soul, and the room, and the very conditions of life of these people are revealed to us.

And now, in a very rough and fragmentary fashion, hardly attempting more than a hurried transcription of my notes, I will call attention to some three or four drawings which especially arrested my attention. In No. 10 we have a cab seen in wonderful perspective; the hind wheel is the nearest point, and in extraordinarily accurate proportion the vehicle and the animal attached to it go up the paper. The cabman turns

half round to address some observation to the "fare," an old gentleman, who is about to step in. The roof of the cab cuts the body of the cabman, composing the picture in a most original and striking manner. The panels of the cab are filled in with simple straight lines, but how beautifully graduated are these lines, how much they are made to say! Above all, the hesitating movement of the old gentleman—how the exact moment has been caught! and the treatment of the long coat, how broad, how certain—how well the artist has said exactly what he wanted to say! Another very fine drawing is No. 11. The fat farmer stands so thoroughly well in his daily habit; the great stomach, how well it is drawn, and the short legs are part and parcel of the stomach. The man is redolent of turnip-fields and rick-yards; all the life of the fields is upon him. And the long parson, clearly from the university, how well he clasps his hands and how the very soul of the man is expressed in the gesture! No. 16 is very wonderful. What movement there is in the skirts of the fat woman, and the legs of the vendor of penny toys! Are they not the very legs that the gutter breeds?

No. 52: a big, bluff artist, deep-seated amid the ferns and grasses. The big, bearded man, who thinks of nothing but his art, who lives in it, who would not be thin because fat enables him to sit longer out of doors, the man who will not even turn round on his camp-stool to see the woman who is speaking to him; we have all known that man, but to me that man never really existed until I looked on this drawing. And the treatment of the trees that make the back-

ground! A few touches of the pencil, and how hot and alive the place is with sunlight!

But perhaps the most wonderful drawing in the entire collection is No. 89. Never did Keene show greater mastery over his material. In this drawing every line of the black-lead pencil is more eloquent than Demosthenes' most eloquent period. The roll and the lurch of the vessel, the tumult of waves and wind, the mental and physical condition of the passengers, all are given as nothing in this world could give them except that magic pencil. The figure, the man that the wind blows out of the picture, his hat about to leave his head, is not he really on board in a gale? Did a frock coat flap out in the wind so well before? And do not the attitudes of the two women leaning over the side represent their suffering? The man who is not sea-sick sits, his legs stretched out, his hands thrust into his pockets, his face sunk on his breast, his hat crushed over his eyes. His pea-jacket, how well drawn! and can we not distinguish the difference between its cloth and the cloth of the frock of the city merchant, who watches with such a woful gaze the progress of the gathering wave? The weight of the wave is indicated with a few straight lines, and, strangely enough, only very slightly varied are the lines which give the very sensation of the merchant's thin frock coat made in the shop of a fashionable tailor.

It has been said that Keene could not draw a lady or a gentleman. Why not add that he was neither a tennis player nor a pigeon shot, a waltzer nor an accomplished French scholar? The same terrible indict-

ment has been preferred against Dickens, and Mr. Henry James says that Balzac failed to prove he was a gentleman. It might be well to remind Mr. James that the artist who would avoid the fashion plate would do well to turn to the coster rather than the duke for inspiration. Keene's genius saved him from the drawing-room, never allowing his gaze to wander from where English characteristics may be gathered most plentifully—the middle and lower classes.

I find in my notes mention of other drawings quite as wonderful as those I have spoken of, but space only remains to give some hint of Keene's place among draughtsmen. As a humorist he was certainly thin compared to Leech; as a satirist he was certainly feeble compared to Gavarni; in dramatic, not to say imaginative, qualities he cannot be spoken of in the same breath as Cruikshank; but as an artist was he not their superior?

NATIONALITY IN ART.

In looking through a collection of Reynolds, Gainsboroughs, Dobsons, Morlands, we are moved by something more than the artistic beauty of the pictures. Seeing that peaceful farmyard by Morland, a dim remote life, a haunting in the blood, rises to the surface of the brain, like a water-flower or weed brought by a sudden current into sight of the passing sky. Seeing that quiet man talking with his swineherd, we are mysteriously attracted, and are perplexed as by a memory; we grow aware of his house and wife, and though these things passed away more than a hundred years ago, we know them all. That other picture, "Partridge Shooting," by Stubbs, how familiar and how intimate it is to us! and those days seem to go back and back into long ago, beyond childhood into infancy. The life of the picture goes back into the life that we heard from our father's, our grandfather's lips, a life of reminiscence and little legend, the end of which passed like a wraith across the dawn of our lives. For we need not be very old to remember the squire ramming the wads home and calling to the setter that is too eagerly pressing forward the pointer in the turnips. A man of fifty can remember seeing the mail coach swing round the curve of the wide,

smooth coach roads; and a man of forty, going by road to the Derby, and the block which came seven miles from Epsom. And so do these pictures take us to the heart of England, to the heart of our life, which is England, to that great circumstance which preceded our birth, and which gave not merely flesh and blood, but the minds that are thinking now. We have only to pass through a doorway to see sublimer works of art. But though Troyon and Courbet were greater artists than Morland, Morland whispers something that is beyond art, beyond even our present life; as a shell with the sound of the sea, these canvases are murmurous with the under life.

That young lady so charmingly dressed in white, she who holds a rose in her hand, is Miss Kitty Calcraft, by Romney. Do we not seem to know her? We ask when we met her, and where we spoke to her; and that mystic when and where seem more real than the moment of present life. The present crowd of living folk fades from us, and we half believe, half know, that she spoke to us one evening on that terrace overlooking those wide pasture lands. We see the happy light of her eyes and hear the joy of her voice, and they stir in us all the impulses of race, of kith and kin.

Romney is often crude, but the worst that can be urged against this portrait is that it is superficial. But what charm and grace there is in its superficiality! Romney was aware of the grace and charm of the young girl as she sat before him in her white dress: he saw her as a flower; and in fluent, agreeable, well-bred and cultivated speech he

has talked to us about her. The portrait has the charm of rare and exquisite conversation; we float in a tide of sensation. He was only aware of her white dress, her pretty arm and hand laid on her soft lap. But while we merely see Kitty, we perceive and think of Gainsborough's portrait of Miss Willoughby. We realise her in other circumstances, away from the beautiful blue trees under which he has so happily placed her; we can see her receiving visitors on the terrace, or leaning over the balustrade looking down the valley, wondering why life has come to her so sadly. We see her in her eighteenth-century drawing-room amid Chippendale and Adams furniture, reading an old novel. No one ever cared much about Miss Willoughby. There is little sensuous charm in her long narrow face, in her hair falling in ringlets over her shoulders; and we are sure that she often reflected on the bitterness of life. But Kitty never looked into the heart of things: when life coincided with her desires, she laughed and was glad; when things, to use her own words, "went wrong," she wept. And in these two portraits we read the stories of the painters' souls.

But the question of nationality, of country, in art detains us. Beautiful beyond compare is the art of Tourguenieff; but how much more intimate, how much deeper is the delight that a Russian finds in his novels than ours! However truly the purely artistic qualities may touch us—great art is universal—we miss our native land and our race in Tourguenieff. We find both in Dickens, in Thackeray. Miss Austen and Fielding have little else; and

vague though Fielding may be in form, still his pages are England, and they whisper the life we inherited from long ago. The superb Rembrandt in the next room, the Gentleman with a Hawk, lent by the Duke of Westminster, is a human revelation. We only perceive in it the charm, the adorableness, the eternal adventure of youth; nationality disappears in the universal. This beautiful portrait was painted in 1643, a year after the "Night-watch." The date of the portrait of the Lady with the Fan is not given. They differ widely in style; the portrait of the man is ten years in advance of the portrait of the woman; it seems to approach very closely, to touch on, the great style which he attained in 1664, the year when he painted the Syndics. Of his early style, thin, crabbed, and yellow, there is hardly a trace in the portrait of the Man with the Hawk; it is almost a complete emancipation, yet it would be rash to say that the Lady with the Fan is an early work, painted in the days of the Lesson in Anatomy. In Rembrandt's work we find sudden advancements towards the grand final style, and these are immediately followed by hasty returnings to the hard, dry, and essentially unromantic manner of 1634. The portrait of the Young Man with the Hawk was painted in middle life. But if it contains something more than the suggestion of the qualities which twenty years later he developed and perfected for the admiration of all time, if the immortal flower of Rembrandt's genius was still unblown, this is blossom prematurely breaking. The young man is shown upon darkness like a vision: the face is illuminated mys-

teriously, the brush-work is large and firm, the paint is substantial without being heavy, the canvas is smoky, an unnatural and yet a real atmosphere surrounds the head. The black velvet cap strikes in sharp relief against the background, which lightens to a grey-green about the head. The modelling of the face is extraordinarily large and simple, and yet without omissions; we have in this portrait a perfect example of the art of being precise without being small. The young man is a young nobleman. He stands before us looking at us, and yet his eyes are not fixed; his moustache is golden and frizzled; his cheeks are coloured slightly; but the picture is practically made of a few greys and greens, and white, slightly tinted with bitumen; yet we do not feel, or feel very little, any lack of colouring matter. Rembrandt realised in the romantic young man his ideal of young masculine beauty. Truly a beautiful work, neither the boyhood nor the manhood, but the adolescence of Rembrandt's genius.

Between the portrait of the Lady with a Fan and Sir Joshua's portrait of Miss Frances Crewe it would be permissible to hesitate; but to hesitate even for one instant between Miss Crewe and the Young Man with the Hawk would be unpardonable. Sir Joshua painted as he thought; he had an instinctive sense of decoration and a deep and tender feeling for beauty; he was especially sensible to the agreeable and gay aspect of things; his eyes at once seize the pleasing and picturesque contour, and his mind divined a charming and effective scheme of colour. He saw character too; all the surface character-

istics of his model were plain to him, and when he was so minded he painted with rare intelligence and insight. He did not see deeply, but he saw clearly. Gainsborough did not see so clearly, nor was his hand as prompt to express his vision as Sir Joshua's; but Gainsborough saw further, for he felt more keenly and more profoundly. But light indeed were their minds compared with Rembrandt's. Rembrandt was a great visionary; to him the outsides of things were symbols of elemental truths, which he expressed in a form mighty as the truths themselves. There is no question of comparison between him on one hand and Reynolds and Gainsborough on the other. Yet we should hesitate to destroy our Reynolds and Gainsboroughs, to preserve any works of art, however beautiful. Were we to keep what our reason told us was the greatest, we should feel as one who surrendered England to save the rest of the world, or as a parent who sacrificed his children to save a million men from the scaffold.

SEX IN ART.

WOMAN'S nature is more facile and fluent than man's. Women do things more easily than men, but they do not penetrate below the surface, and if they attempt to do so the attempt is but a clumsy masquerade in unbecoming costume. In their own costume they have succeeded as queens, courtesans, and actresses, but in the higher arts, in painting, in music, and literature, their achievements are slight indeed—best when confined to the arrangements of themes invented by men—amiable transpositions suitable to boudoirs and fans.

I have heard that some women hold that the mission of their sex extends beyond the boudoir and the nursery. It is certainly not within my province to discuss so important a question, but I think it is clear that all that is best in woman's art is done within the limits I have mentioned. This conclusion is well-nigh forced upon us when we consider what would mean the withdrawal of all that women have done in art. The world would certainly be the poorer by some half-dozen charming novels, by a few charming poems and sketches in oil and water-colour; but it cannot be maintained, at least not seriously, that if these charming triflings were withdrawn there would remain any gap in the world's

art to be filled up. Women have created nothing, they have carried the art of men across their fans charmingly, with exquisite taste, delicacy, and subtlety of feeling, and they have hideously and most mournfully parodied the art of men. George Eliot is one in whom sex seems to have hesitated, and this unfortunate hesitation was afterwards intensified by unhappy circumstances. She was one of those women who so entirely mistook her vocation as to attempt to think, and really if she had assumed the dress and the duties of a policeman, her failure could hardly have been more complete. Jane Austen, on the contrary, adventured in no such dismal masquerade; she was a nice maiden lady, gifted with a bright clear intelligence, diversified with the charms of light wit and fancy, and as she was content to be in art what she was in nature, her books live, while those of her ponderous rival are being very rapidly forgotten. "Romola" and "Daniel Deronda" are dead beyond hope of resurrection; "The Mill on the Floss," being more feminine, still lives, even though its destiny is to be forgotten when "Pride and Prejudice" is remembered.

Sex is as important an element in a work of art as it is in life; all art that lives is full of sex. There is sex in "Pride and Prejudice"; "Jane Eyre" and "Aurora Leigh" are full of sex; "Romola," "Daniel Deronda," and "Adam Bede" are sexless, and therefore lifeless. There is very little sex in George Sand's works, and they, too, have gone the way of sexless things. When I say that all art that lives is full of

sex, I do not mean that the artist must have led a profligate life; I mean, indeed, the very opposite. George Sand's life was notoriously profligate, and her books tell the tale. I mean by sex that concentrated essence of life which the great artist jealously reserves for his art, and through which it pulsates. Shelley deserted his wife, but his thoughts never wandered far from Mary. Dante, according to recent discoveries, led a profligate life, while adoring Beatrice through interminable cantos. So profligacy is clearly not the word I want. I think that gallantry expresses my meaning better.

The great artist and Don Juan are irreparably antagonistic; one cannot contain the other. Notwithstanding all the novels that have been written to prove the contrary, it is certain that woman occupies but a small place in the life of an artist. She is never more than a charm, a relaxation, in his life; and even when he strains her to his bosom, oceans are between them. Profligate, I am afraid, history proves the artist sometimes to have been, but his profligacy is only ephemeral and circumstantial; what is abiding in him is chastity of mind, though not always of body; his whole mind is given to his art, and all vague philanderings and sentimental musings are unknown to him; the women he knows and perceives are only food for it, and have no share in his mental life. And it is just because man can raise himself above the sentimental cravings of natural affection that his art is so infinitely higher than woman's art. "Man's love is from man's life a thing apart"—you know the quotation from

Byron, "'Tis woman's whole existence." The natural affections fill a woman's whole life, and her art is only so much sighing and gossiping about them. Very delightful and charming gossiping it often is—full of a sweetness and tenderness which we could not well spare, but always without force or dignity.

In her art woman is always in evening dress: there are flowers in her hair, and her fan waves to and fro, and she wishes to sigh in the ear of him who sits beside her. Her mental nudeness is parallel with her low bodice, it is that and nothing more. She will make no sacrifice for her art; she will not tell the truth about herself as frankly as Jean Jacques, nor will she observe life from the outside with the grave impersonal vision of Flaubert. In music women have done nothing, and in painting their achievement has been almost as slight. It is only in the inferior art—the art of acting—that women approach men. In that art it is not certain that they do not stand even higher.

Whatever women have done in painting has been done in France. England produces countless thousands of lady artists; twenty Englishwomen paint for one Frenchwoman, but we have not yet succeeded in producing two that compare with Madame Lebrun and Madame Berthe Morisot. The only two Englishwomen who have in painting come prominently before the public are Angelica Kauffman and Lady Butler. The first-named had the good fortune to live in the great age, and though her work is individually feeble, it is stamped with the charm of the tradition out of which it grew and was fashioned. Moreover, she was content to remain a woman in her

art. She imitated Sir Joshua Reynolds to the best of her ability, and did all in her power to induce him to marry her. How she could have shown more wisdom it is difficult to see. Lady Butler was not so fortunate, either in the date of her birth, in her selection of a master, or her manner of imitating him. Angelica imitated as a woman should. She carried the art of Sir Joshua across her fan; she arranged and adorned it with ribbons and sighs, and was content with such modest achievement.

Lady Butler, however, thought she could do more than to sentimentalise with De Neuville's soldiers. She adopted his method, and from this same standpoint tried to do better; her attitude towards him was the same as Rosa Bonheur's towards Troyon; and the failure of Lady Butler was even greater than Rosa Bonheur's. But perhaps the best instance I could select to show how impossible it is for women to do more than to accept the themes invented by men, and to decorate and arrange them according to their pretty feminine fancies, is the collection of Lady Waterford's drawings now on exhibition at Lady Brownlow's house in Carlton House Terrace.

Lady Waterford for many years—for more than a quarter of a century—has been spoken of as the one amateur of genius; and the greatest artists vied with each other as to which should pay the most extravagant homage to her talent. Mr. Watts seems to have distanced all competitors in praise of her, for in a letter of his quoted in the memoir prefixed to the catalogue, he says that she has exceeded all the great Venetian masters. It was

nice of Mr. Watts to write such a letter; it was very foolish of Lady Brownlow to print it in the catalogue, for it serves no purpose except to draw attention to the obvious deficiencies of originality in Lady Waterford's drawings. Nearly all of them are remarkable for facile grouping; and the colour is rich, somewhat heavy, but generally harmonious; the drawing is painfully conventional; it would be impossible to find a hand, an arm, a face that has been tenderly observed and rendered with any personal feeling or passion.

The cartoons are not better than any mediocre student of the Beaux-Arts could do—insipid parodies of the Venetian—whom she excels, according to Mr. Watts. When Lady Waterford attempted no more than a decorative ring of children dancing in a richly coloured landscape, or a group of harvesters seen against a rich decorative sky, such a design as might be brought across a fan, her talent is seen to best advantage; it is a fluent and facile talent, strangely unoriginal, but always sustained by taste acquired by long study of the Venetians, and by a superficial understanding of their genius.

Many times superior to Lady Waterford is Miss Armstrong—a lady in whose drawings of children we perceive just that light tenderness and fanciful imagination which is not of our sex. Perhaps memory betrays me; it is a long while since I have seen Miss Armstrong's pastels, but my impression is that Miss Armstrong stands easily at the head of English lady artists—above Mrs. Swynnerton,

whose resolute and distinguished talent was never more abundantly and strikingly manifested than in her picture entitled "Midsummer," now hanging in the New Gallery. "Midsummer" is a fine piece of intellectual painting, but it proceeds merely from the brain; there is hardly anything of the painter's nature in it; there are no surprising admissions in it; the painter never stood back abashed and asked herself if she should have confessed so much, if she should have told the world so much of what was passing in her intimate soul and flesh.

Impersonality in art really means mediocrity. If you have nothing to tell about yourself, or if courage be lacking in you to tell the truth, you are not an artist. Are women without souls, or is it that they dare not reveal their souls unadorned with the laces and ribbons of convention? Their memoirs are a tissue of lies, suppressions, and half-truths. George Sand must fain suppress all mention of her Italian journey with Musset, a true account of which would have been an immortal story; but of hypocritical hare-hearted allusions Rousseau and Casanova were not made; in their memoirs women never get further than some slight fingering of laces; and in their novels they are too subject to their own natures to attain the perfect and complete realisation of self, which the so-called impersonal method alone affords. Women astonish us as much by their want of originality as they do by their extraordinary powers of assimilation. I am thinking now of the ladies who marry painters, and who, after a few years of married life, exhibit work identical in execution with that of

their illustrious husbands—Mrs. E. M. Ward, Madame Fantin-Latour, Mrs. Swan, Mrs. Alma-Tadema. How interesting these households must be! Immediately after breakfast husband and wife sit down at their easels. "Let me mix a tone for you, dear," "I think I would put that up a little higher," etc. In a word, what Manet used to call *la peinture à quatre mains.*

Nevertheless, among these well-intentioned ladies we find one artist of rare excellence—I mean Madame Lebrun. We all know her beautiful portrait of a woman walking forward, her hands in a muff. Seeing the engraving from a distance we might take it for a Romney; but when we approach, the quality of the painting visible through the engraving tells us that it belongs to the French school. In design the portrait is strangely like a Romney; it is full of all that brightness and grace, and that feminine refinement, which is a distinguishing characteristic of his genius, and which was especially impressed on my memory by the portrait of the lady in the white dress walking forward, her hands in front of her, the slight fingers pressed one against the other, exhibited this year in the exhibition of Old Masters in the Academy.

But if we deny that the portrait of the lady with the muff affords testimony as to the sex of the painter, we must admit that none but a woman could have conceived the portrait which Madame Lebrun painted of herself and her little daughter. The painting may be somewhat dry and hard, it certainly betrays none of the fluid nervous tendernesses and graces of the female temperament; but surely none but a woman and a

mother could have designed that original and expressive composition; it was a mother who found instinctively that touching and expressive movement —the mother's arms circled about her little daughter's waist, the little girl leaning forward, her face resting on her mother's shoulder. Never before did artist epitomise in a gesture all the familiar affection and simple persuasive happiness of home; the very atmosphere of an embrace is in this picture. And in this picture the painter reveals herself to us in one of the intimate moments of her daily life, the tender, wistful moment when a mother receives her growing girl in her arms, the adolescent girl having run she knows not why to her mother. These two portraits, both in the Louvre, are, I regret to say, the only pictures of Madame Lebrun that I am acquainted with. But I doubt if my admiration would be increased by a wider knowledge of her work. She seems to have said everything she had to say in these two pictures.

Madame Lebrun painted well, but she invented nothing; she failed to make her own of any special manner of seeing and rendering things; she failed to create a style. Only one woman did this, and that woman is Madame Morisot, and her pictures are the only pictures painted by a woman that could not be destroyed without creating a blank, a hiatus in the history of art. True that the hiatus would be slight—insignificant if you will—but the insignificant is sometimes dear to us; and though nightingales, thrushes, and skylarks were to sing in King's Bench Walk, I should miss the individual chirp of the pretty sparrow.

Madame Morisot's note is perhaps as insignificant as a sparrow's, but it is as unique and as individual a note. She has created a style, and has done so by investing her art with all her femininity; her art is no dull parody of ours: it is all womanhood—sweet and gracious, tender and wistful womanhood. Her first pictures were painted under the influence of Corot, and two of these early works were hung in the exhibition of her works held the other day at Goupil's, Boulevard Montmartre. The more important was, I remember, a view of Paris seen from a suburb—a green railing and two loitering nursemaids in the foreground, the middle of the picture filled with the city faintly seen and faintly glittering in the hour of the sun's decline, between four and six. It was no disagreeable or ridiculous parody of Corot; it was Corot feminised, Corot reflected in a woman's soul, a woman's love of man's genius, a lake-reflected moon. But Corot's influence did not endure. Through her sister's marriage Madame Morisot came in contact with Manet, and she was quick to recognise him as being the greatest artist that France had produced since Delacroix.

Henceforth she never faltered in her allegiance to the genius of her great brother-in-law. True, that she attempted no more than to carry his art across her fan; but how adorably she did this! She got from him that handling out of which the colour flows joyous and bright as well-water, the handling that was necessary for the realisation of that dream of hers, a light world afloat in an irradiation—light trembling upon the shallows of artificial water,

where swans and aquatic birds are plunging, and light skiffs are moored; light turning the summer trees to blue; light sleeping a soft and lucid sleep in the underwoods; light illumining the green summer of leaves where the diamond rain is still dripping; light transforming into jewellery the happy flight of bees and butterflies. Her swans are not diagrams drawn upon the water, their whiteness appears and disappears in the trembling of the light; and the underwood, how warm and quiet it is, and penetrated with the life of the summer; and the yellow-painted skiff, how happy and how real! Colours: tints of faint green and mauve passed lightly, a few branches indicated. Truly, the art of Manet *transporté en éventail.*

A brush that writes rather than paints, that writes exquisite notes in the sweet seduction of a perfect epistolary style, notes written in a boudoir, notes of invitation, sometimes confessions of love, the whole feminine heart trembling as a hurt bird trembles in a man's hand. And here are yachts and blue water, the water full of the blueness of the sky; and the confusion of masts and rigging is perfectly indicated without tiresome explanation! The colour is deep and rich, for the values have been truly observed; and the pink house on the left is an exquisite note. No deep solutions, an art afloat and adrift upon the canvas, as a woman's life floats on the surface of life. "My sister-in-law would not have existed without me," I remember Manet saying to me in one of the long days we spent together in the Rue d'Amsterdam. True,

indeed, that she would not have existed without him; and yet she has something that he has not —the charm of an exquisite feminine fancy, the charm of her sex. Madame Morisot is the eighteenth century quick with the nineteenth; she is the nineteenth turning her eyes regretfully looking back on the eighteenth.

Chaplin parodied the eighteenth century; in Madame Morisot something of its gracious spirit naturally resides; she is eighteenth century especially in her drawings; they are fluent and flowing; nowhere do we detect a measurement taken, they are free of tricks—that is to say of ignorance assuming airs of learning. That red chalk drawing of a naked girl, how simple, loose, and unaffected, how purged of the odious erudition of the modern studio. And her precious and natural remembrance of the great century, with all its love of youth and the beauties of youthful lines, is especially noticeable in the red chalk drawing of the girl wearing a bonnet, the veil falling and hiding her beautiful eyes. As I stood lost in admiration of this drawing, I heard a rough voice behind me: "C'est bien beau, n'est pas?" It was Claude Monet. "Yes, isn't it superb?" I answered. "I wonder how much they'll sell it for." "I'll soon find out that," said Monet, and turning to the attendant he asked the question.

"Pour vous, sept cents cinquante francs."

"C'est bien; il est à moi."

This anecdote will give a better idea of the value of Berthe Morisot than seventy columns of mine or any other man's criticism.

MR. STEER'S EXHIBITION.

1892.

BEFORE sitting down to paint a landscape the artist must make up his mind whether he is going to use the trees, meadows, streams, and mountains before him as subject-matter for a decoration in the manner of the Japanese, or whether he will take them as subject-matter for the expression of a human emotion in the manner of Wilson and Millet. I offer no opinion which is the higher and which is the lower road; they may be wide apart, they may draw very close together, they may overlap so that it is difficult to say along which the artist is going; but, speaking roughly, there are but two roads, and it is necessary that the artist should choose between them. But this point has been fully discussed elsewhere, and I only allude to it here because I wish to assure my readers that Mr. Steer's exhibition is not "Folkestone at low tide" and "Folkestone at high tide."

In all the criticisms I have seen of the present exhibition it has been admitted that Mr. Steer takes a foremost place in what is known as the modern movement. I also noticed that it was admitted that Mr. Steer is a born artist. The expression, from constant use, has lost its true significance; yet to find

another phrase that would express the idea more explicitly would be difficult; the born artist, meaning the man in whom feeling and expression are one.

The growth of a work of art is as inexplicable as that of a flower. We know that there are men who feel deeply and who understand clearly what a work of art should be; but when they attempt to create, their efforts are abortive. Their ideas, their desires, their intentions, their plans, are excellent; but the passage between the brain and the canvas, between the brain and the sheet of paper, is full of ship-wrecking reefs, and the intentions of these men do not correspond in the least with their execution. Noticing our blank faces, they explain their ideas in front of their works. They meant this, they meant that. Inwardly we answer, "All you say is most interesting; but why didn't you put all that into your picture, into your novel?"

Then Mr. Steer is not an abortive genius, for his ideas do not come to utter shipwreck in the perilous passage; they often lose a spar or two, they sometimes appear in a more or less dismantled condition, but they retain their masts; they come in with some yards of canvas still set, and the severest criticism that can be passed on them is, "With a little better luck that would have been a very fine thing indeed." And not infrequently Mr. Steer's pictures correspond very closely with the mental conception in which they originated; sometimes little or nothing has been lost as the idea passed from the brain to the canvas, and it is on account of these pictures that we say that Mr. Steer is a born artist. This once granted, the

question arises: is this born artist likewise a great artist—will he formulate his sensation, and give us a new manner of feeling and seeing, or will he merely succeed in painting some beautiful pictures when circumstances and the mood of the moment combine in his favour? This is a question which all who visit the exhibition of this artist's work, now on view in the Goupil Galleries, will ask themselves. They will ask if this be the furthest limit to which he may go, or if he will discover a style entirely his own which will enable him to convey all his sensation of life upon the canvas.

That Mr. Steer's drawing does not suggest a future draughtsman seems to matter little, for we remember that colour, and not form, is the impulse that urges and inspires him. Mr. Steer draws well enough to take a high place if he can overcome more serious defects. His greatest peril seems to me to be an uncontrollable desire to paint in the style of the last man whose work has interested him. At one time it was only in his most unguarded moments that he could see a landscape otherwise than as Monet saw it; a year or two later it was Whistler who dictated certain schemes of colour, certain harmonious arrangements of black; and the most distressing symptom of all is that Mr. Brabazon could not hold an exhibition of some very nice tints of rose and blue without inspiring Mr. Steer to go and swish water-colour about in the same manner. Mr. Steer has the defect of his qualities; his perceptions are naïve: and just as he must have thought seven years ago that all modern landscape-painters must be more or less like Monet, he must have

thought last summer that all modern water-colour must be more or less like Mr. Brabazon. This is doubly unfortunate, because Mr. Steer is only good when he is Steer, and nothing but Steer.

How much we should borrow, and how we should borrow, are questions which will agitate artists for all time. It is certain, however, that one of the most certain signs of genius is the power to take from others and to assimilate. How much did Rubens take from Titian? How much did Mr. Whistler take from the Japanese? Almost everything in Mr. Whistler already existed in art. In the National Gallery the white stocking in the Philip reminds us of the white stockings in the portrait of Miss Alexander. In the British Museum we find the shadows that he transferred from Rembrandt to his own etchings. Degas took his drawing from Ingres and his colour—that lovely brown!—from Poussin. But, notwithstanding their vast borrowings, Rubens is always Rubens, Whistler is always Whistler, and Degas is always Degas. Alexander took a good deal, too, but he too remained always Alexander. We must conquer what we take. But what Mr. Steer takes often conquers him; he is often like one suffering from a weak digestion, he cannot assimilate. I must except, however, that very beautiful picture, "Two Yachts lying off Cowes." Under a deepening sky of mauve the yachts lie, their lights and rigging showing through the twilight. We may say that this picture owes something to Mr. Whistler; but the debt is not distressing; it does not strike the eye; it does not prevent us from seeing the picture — a very beautiful piece of decoration in a high key of colour

—a picture which it would be difficult to find fault with. It is without fault; the intention of the artist was a beautiful one, and it has been completely rendered. I like quite as well "The Casino, Boulogne," the property, I note with some interest, of Mr. Humphry Ward, art critic of the *Times*. Mr. Humphry Ward must write conventional commonplace, otherwise he could not remain art critic of the *Times*, so it is pleasant to find that he is withal an excellent judge of a picture. The picture, I suppose, in a very remote and distant way, may be said to be in the style of Wilson. Again a successful assimilation. The buildings stand high up, they are piled high up in the picture, and a beautiful blue envelops sky, sea, and land. Nos. 1 and 2 show Mr. Steer at his best: that beautiful blue, that beautiful mauve, is the optimism of painting. Such colour is to the colourist what the drug is to the opium-eater: nothing matters, the world is behind us, and we dream on and on, lost in an infinity of suggestion. This quality, which, for want of a better expression, I call the optimism of painting, is a peculiar characteristic of Mr. Steer's work. We find it again in "Children Paddling." Around the long breakwater the sea winds, filling the estuary, or perchance recedes, for the incoming tide is noisier; a delicious, happy, opium blue, the blue of oblivion. . . . Paddling in the warm sea-water gives oblivion to those children. They forget their little worries in the sensation of sea and sand, as I forget mine in that dreamy blue which fades and deepens imperceptibly, like a flower from the intense heart to the delicate edge of the petals.

The vague sea is drawn up behind the breakwater, and out of it the broad sky ascends solemnly in curves like palms. Happy sensation of daylight; a flower-like afternoon; little children paddling; the world is behind them; they are as flowers, and are conscious only of the benedictive influences of sand and sea and sky.

The exhibition contains nearly every description of work: full-length portraits in oil, life-size heads, eight-inch panels, and some half-dozen water-colours. A little girl in a starched white frock is a charming picture, and the large picture entitled "The Sofa" is a most distinguished piece of work, full of true pictorial feeling. Mr. Steer is never common or vulgar; he is distinguished even when he fails. "A Girl in a Large Hat" is a picture which became my property some three or four months ago. Since then I have seen it every day, and I like it better and better. That hat is so well placed in the canvas; the expression of the face and body, are they not perfect? What an air of resignation, of pensiveness, this picture exhales! The jacket is done with a few touches, but they are sufficient, for they are in their right places. And the colour! Hardly do you find any, and yet there is an effect of colour which few painters could attain when they had exhausted all the resources of the palette.

CLAUDE MONET.

WHETHER the pictures in the Royal Academy be bad or good, the journalist must describe them. The public goes to the Academy, and the journalist must follow the traffic, like the omnibuses. But the public, the English public, does not go to the Salon or to the Champ de Mars. Why, then, should our newspapers waste space on the description of pictures which not one reader in fifty has seen or will see? I suppose the demon of actuality is answerable for the wasted columns, and the demon of habit for my yearly wanderings over deserts of cocoa-nut matting, under tropical skylights, in continual torment from glaring oil-paintings. Of the days I have spent in those exhibitions, nothing remains but the memory of discomfort, and the sense of relief experienced on coming to a room in which there were no pictures. Ah, the arm-chairs into which I slipped and the tapestries that rested my jaded eyes! . . . So this year I resolved to break with habit and to visit neither the Salon nor the Champ de Mars. An art critic I am, but surely independent of pictures—at least, of modern pictures; indeed, they stand between me and the interesting article ninety times in a hundred.

Only now and then do we meet a modern artist about

whom we may rhapsodise, or at whom we may curse: Claude Monet is surely such an one. So I pricked up my ears when I heard there was an exhibition of his work at Durand Ruel's. I felt I was on the trail of an interesting article, and away I went. The first time I pondered and argued with myself. Then I went with an intelligent lady, and was garrulous, explanatory, and theoretical; she listened, and said she would write out all I had said from her point of view. The third time I went with two artists. We were equally garrulous and argumentative, and with the result that we three left the exhibition more than ever confirmed in the truth of our opinions. I mention these facts, not, as the ill-natured might suppose, because it pleases me to write about my own sayings and doings, but because I believe my conduct to be typical of the conduct of hundreds of others in regard to the present exhibition in the Rue Laffitte; for, let this be said in Monet's honour: every day artists from every country in Europe go there by themselves, with their women friends, and with other artists, and every day since the exhibition opened, the galleries have been the scene of passionate discussion.

My own position regarding Monet is a peculiar one, and I give it for what it is worth. It is about eighteen years since I first made the acquaintance of this remarkable man. Though at first shocked, I was soon convinced of his talent, and set myself about praising him as well as I knew how. But my prophesying was answered by scoffs, jeers, supercilious smiles. Outside of the Café of the Nouvelle Athènes,

Monet was a laughing-stock. Manet was bad enough; but when it came to Monet, words were inadequate to express sufficient contempt. A shrug of the shoulders or a pitying look, which clearly meant, "Art thou most of madman or simpleton, or, maybe, impudent charlatan who would attract attention to himself by professing admiration for such eccentricity?"

It was thus eighteen years ago; but revolution has changed depth to height, and Monet is now looked upon as the creator of the art of landscape painting; before him nothing was, after him nothing can be, for he has said all things and made the advent of another painter impossible, inconceivable. He who could never do a right thing can now do no wrong one. Canvases beside which the vaguest of Mr. Whistler's nocturnes are clear statements of plain fact, lilac-coloured canvases void of design or tone, or quality of paint, are accepted by a complacent public, and bought by American millionaires for vast sums; and the early canvases about which Paris would not once tolerate a word of praise, are now considered old-fashioned. My personal concern in all this enthusiasm—the enthusiasm of the fashionable market-place—is that I once more find myself a dissident, and a dissident in a very small minority. I think of Monet now as I thought of him eighteen years ago. For no moment did it seem to me possible to think of him as an equal of Corot or of Millet. He seemed a painter of great talent, of exceptional dexterity of hand, and of clear and rapid vision. His vision

seemed then somewhat impersonal; the temper of his mind did not illuminate his pictures; he was a marvellous mirror, reproducing all the passing phenomena of Nature; and that was all. And looking at his latest work, his views of Rouen Cathedral, it seems to me that he has merely continued to develop the qualities for which we first admired him —clearness of vision and a marvellous technical execution. So extraordinary is this later execution that, by comparison, the earlier seems timid and weak. His naturalism has expanded and strengthened: mine has decayed and almost fallen from me.

Monet's handicraft has grown like a weed; it now overtops and chokes the idea; it seems in these façades to exist by itself, like a monstrous and unnatural ivy, independent of support; and when expression outruns the thought, it ceases to charm. We admire the marvellous mastery with which Monet drew tower and portico: see that tower lifted out of blue haze, no delicacy of real perspective has been omitted; see that portico bathed in sunlight and shadow, no form of ornament has been slurred; but we are fain of some personal sense of beauty, we miss that rare delicacy of perception which delights us in Mr. Whistler's "Venice," and in Guardi's vision of cupolas, stairways, roofs, gondolas, and waterways. Monet sees clearly, and he sees truly, but does he see beautifully? is his an enchanted vision? And is not every picture that fails to move, to transport, to enchant, a mistake?

A work of art is complete in itself. But is any one of these pictures complete in itself? Is not the

effect they produce dependent on the number, and may not this set of pictures be compared to a set of scenes in a theatre, the effect of which is attained by combination? There is no foreground in them; the cathedral is always in the first plane, directly under the eye of the spectator, the wall running out of the picture. The spectator says, "What extraordinary power was necessary to paint twelve views of that cathedral without once having recourse to the illusion of distance!" A feat no doubt it was; and therein we perceive the artistic weakness of the pictures. For art must not be confounded with the strong man in the fair who straddles, holding a full-grown woman on the palm of his hand.

Then the question of the quality of paint. Manet's paint was beautiful as that of an old master; brilliant as an enamel, smooth as an old ivory. But the quality of paint in Monet is that of stone and mortar. It would seem (the thought is too monstrous to be entertained) as if he had striven by thickness of paint and roughness of the handling to reproduce the very material quality of the stonework. This would be realism *à outrance*. I will not think that Monet was haunted for a single instant by so shameful a thought. However this may be, the fact remains that a *trompe-l'œil* has been achieved, and four inches of any one of these pictures looked at separately would be mistaken by sight and touch for a piece of stonework. In another picture, in a haystack with the sun shining on it, the *trompe-l'œil* has again been as cleverly achieved as by the most cunning of scene-painters. So the haystack is a popular delight.

NOTES.

MR. MARK FISHER.

MARK FISHER is a nineteenth-century Morland; the disposition of mind and character of vision seem the same in both painters, the outlook almost identical: the same affectionate interest in humble life, the same power of apprehending the pathos of work, the same sympathy for the life that thinks not. But beyond these qualities of mind common to both painters, Morland possessed a sense of beauty and grace which is absent in Mark Fisher. Morland's pig-styes are more beautifully seen than Mark Fisher could see them. But is the sense of beauty, which was most certainly Morland's, so inherent and independent a possession that we must regard it as his rather than the common inheritance of those who lived in his time? Surely Mark Fisher would have seen more beautifully if he had lived in the eighteenth century? Or, to put the case more clearly, surely Morland would have seen

very much as Mark Fisher sees if he had lived in the nineteenth? Think of the work done by Morland in the field and farmyard—it is in that work that he lives; compare it with Mark Fisher's, subtracting, of course, all that Morland owed to his time, quality of paint, and a certain easy sense of beauty, and say if you can that both men do not stand on the same intellectual plane.

To tell the story of the life of the fields, and to tell it sincerely, without false sentiment, was their desire; nor do we detect in either Morland or Mark Fisher any pretence of seeing more in their subjects than is natural for them to see: in Jacques, yes. Jacques tried to think profoundly, like Millet; Mark Fisher does not; nor was Morland influenced by the caustic mind of Hogarth to satirise the animalism of the boors he painted. He saw rural life with the same kindly eyes as Mark Fisher. The difference between the two men is a difference of means, of expression—I mean the exterior envelope in which the work of the mind lives, and which preserves and assures a long life to the painter. On this point no comparison is possible between the eighteenth and nineteenth century painter. We should seek in vain in Mark Fisher for Morland's beautiful smooth painting, for his fluent and easy drawing, the complete and easy vehicle of his vision of things. Mark Fisher draws well, but he often draws awkwardly; he possesses the sentiment of proportion and the instinct of anatomy; we admire the sincerity and we recognise the truth, but we miss the charm of that easy and perfect expression which was current in

Morland's time. Mark Fisher is a man who has something to say and who says it in a somewhat barbarous manner. He dreams hardly at all, his thoughts are ordinary, and are only saved from commonplace by his absence of affectation. He is not without sentiment, but his sentiment is a little plain. His hand is his worst enemy; the touch is seldom interesting or beautiful.

I said that Morland saw nature with the same kindly eyes as Mark Fisher. I would have another word on that point. Mark Fisher's painting is optimistic. His skies are blue, his sunlight dozes in the orchard, his chestnut trees are in bloom. The melodrama of nature never appears in his pictures; his lanes and fields reflect a gentle mind that has found happiness in observing the changes of the seasons. Happy Mark Fisher! An admirable painter, the best, the only landscape-painter of our time; the one who continues the tradition of Potter and Morland, and lives for his art, uninfluenced by the clamour of cliques.

A PORTRAIT BY MR. SARGENT.

Mr. Sargent has painted the portrait of a beautiful woman and of a beautiful drawing-room; the picture is full of technical accomplishment. But is it a beautiful picture?

She is dressed in cherry-coloured velvet, and she sits on the edge of a Louis XV. sofa, one arm by her

side, the other thrown a little behind her, the hand leaning against the sofa. Behind her are pale yellow draperies, and under her feet is an Aubasson carpet. The drawing is swift, certain, and complete. The movement of the arm is so well rendered that we know the exact pressure of the long fingers that melt into a padded silken sofa. But is the drawing distinguished, or subtle, or refined? or is it mere parade of knowledge and practice of hand? The face charms us with its actuality; but is there a touch intimately characteristic of the model? or is it merely a vivacious appearance?

But if the drawing when judged by the highest standard fails to satisfy us, what shall be said of the colour? Think of a cherry-coloured velvet filling half the picture—the pale cherry pink known as cerise—with mauve lights, and behind it pale yellowish draperies and an Aubasson carpet under the lady's feet. Of course this is very "daring," but is it anything more? Is the colour deep and sonorous, like Alfred Stevens' red velvets; or is it thin and harsh, like Duran? Has any attempt been made to compose the colour, to carry it through the picture? There are a few touches of red in the carpet, none in the draperies, so the dress is practically a huge splash transferred from nature to the canvas. And when we ask ourselves if the picture has style, is not the answer: It is merely the apotheosis of fashionable painting? It is what Messrs. Shannon, Hacker, and Solomon would like to do, but what they cannot do. Mr. Sargent has realised their dreams for them; he has told us what the new

generation of Academicians want, he has revealed their souls' desire, and it is—*l'article de Paris.*

The portrait is therefore a prodigious success; to use an expression which will be understood in the studios, "it knocks the walls silly;" you see nothing else in the gallery; and it wins the suffrages of the artists and the public alike. Duran never drew so fluently as that, nor was he ever capable of so pictorial an intention. Chaplin, for it recalls Chaplin, was always heavier, more conventional; above all, less real. For it is very real, and just the reality that ladies like, reality without grossness; in other words, without criticism. So Mr. Sargent gets his public, as the saying goes, "all round." He gets the ladies, because it realises the ideal they have formed of themselves; he gets the artists, because it is the realisation of the pictorial ideals of the present day.

The picture has been described as marvellous, brilliant, astonishing, superb, but no one has described it as beautiful. Whether because of the commonness of the epithet, or because every one felt that beautiful was not the adjective that expressed the sensation the picture awoke in him, I know not. It is essentially a picture of the hour; it fixes the idea of the moment and reminds one somewhat of a *première* at the Vaudeville with Sarah in a new part. Every one is on the *qui vive.* The *salle* is alive with murmurs of approbation. It is the joy of the passing hour, the delirium of the sensual present. The appeal is the same as that of food and drink and air and love. But when painters are pursuing new ideals, when all that constitutes the appearance of our day has changed,

I fear that many will turn with a shudder from its cold, material accomplishment.

AN ORCHID BY MR. JAMES.

A KENSINGTON Museum student would have drawn that flower carefully with a lead pencil; it would be washed with colour and stippled until it reached the quality of wool, which is so much admired in that art training-school; and whenever the young lady was not satisfied with the turn her work was taking, she would wash the displeasing portion out and start afresh. The difference—there are other differences—but the difference we are concerned with between this hypothetical young person of Kensington education and Mr. James, is that the drawing which Mr. James exhibits is not a faithful record of all the difficulties that are met with in painting an orchid. A hundred orchids preceded the orchid on the wall—some were good in colour and failed in drawing, and *vice versâ*. Others were excellent in drawing and colour, but the backgrounds did not come out right. All these were destroyed. That mauve and grey orchid was probably not even sketched in with a lead pencil. Mr. James desired an uninterrupted expression of its beauty: to first sketch it with a pencil would be to lose something of his first vividness of impression. It must flow straight out of the brush. But to attain such fluency it was necessary to paint that orchid a hundred times before its form and colour were learnt sufficiently to admit of the expres-

sion of all the flower's beauty in one painting. It is not that Mr. James has laboured less but ten times more than the Kensington student. But all the preliminary labour having been discarded, it seems as simple and as slight a thing as may be—a flower in a glass, the flower drawn only in its essentials, the glass faintly indicated, a flowing tint of mauve dissolving to grey, the red heart of the flower for the centre of interest. A decoration for where? I imagine it in a boudoir whose walls are stretched and whose windows are curtained with grey silk. From the ceiling hangs a chandelier, cut glass—pure Louis XV. The furniture that I see is modern; but here and there a *tabouret*, a *guéridon*, or a delicate *étagère*, filled with tiny volumes of Musset and two or three rare modern writers, recall the eighteenth century. And who sits in this delicate boudoir perfumed with a faint scent, a sachet-scented pocket-handkerchief? Surely one of Sargent's ladies. Perhaps the lady in the shot-silk dress who sat on an eighteenth-century French sofa two years ago in the Academy, her tiny, plump, curved white hand, drawn as well in its interior as in exterior limits, hanging over the gilt arm of the sofa. But she sits now, in the boudoir I have imagined, in a low arm-chair covered with grey silk; her feet lie one over the other on the long-haired rug; the fire burns low in the grate, and the soft spring sunlight laps through the lace curtains, filling the room with a bland, moody, retrospective atmosphere. She sits facing Mr. James's water-colour. She is looking at it, she does not see it; her thoughts are far away, and their importance is slight.

THE WHISTLER ALBUM.

THE photograph of the portrait of Miss Alexander is as suggestive of the colour as a pianoforte arrangement of *Tristan* is of the orchestration. The sounds of the different instruments come through the thin tinkle of the piano just as the colour of the blond hair, the delicate passages of green-grey and green, come through the black and white of the photograph. Truly a beautiful thing! But "Before the Mirror" reflects perhaps a deeper beauty. The influence of that strange man, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, is sufficiently plain in this picture. He who could execute hardly at all in paint, and whose verse is Italian, though the author wrote and spoke no language but English, foisted the character of his genius upon all the poetry and painting of his generation. It is as present in this picture as it is in Swinburne's first volume of Poems and Ballads. Mr. Whistler took the type of woman and the sentiment of the picture from Rossetti; he saw that even in painting Rossetti had something to say, and, lest an artistic thought should be lost to the world through inadequate expression, he painted this picture. He did not go on painting pictures in the Rossetti sentiment, because he thought he had exhausted Rossetti in one picture. In this he was possibly mistaken, but the large, white, indolent shoulders, misshapen, almost grotesque in original Rossettis, are here in beautiful prime and plenitude; the line of the head and neck, the hair falling over the stooped shoulder

—a sensuous dream it is; all her body's beauty, to borrow a phrase from Rossetti, is in that white dress; and the beauty of the arm in its full white sleeve lies along the white chimney-piece, the fingers languidly open: two fallen over the edge, two touching the blue vase. Note how beautiful is the placing of this figure in the picture; how the golden head shines, high up in the right-hand corner, and the white dress and white-sleeved arms fill the picture with an exquisite music of proportion. The dress cuts against the black grate, and the angle of black is the very happiest; it is brightened with pink sprays of azaleas, and they seem to whisper the very enchanted bloom of their life into the picture. Never did Dutch or Japanese artist paint flowers like these. And the fluent music of the painting seems only to enforce the languor and reverie which this canvas exhales: the languor of white dress and gold hair; languor and golden reverie float in the mirror like a sunset in placid waters. The profile in full light is thrilled with grief of present hours; the full face half lost in shadow, far away—a ghost of a dead self—is dreaming with half-closed eyes, unmindful of what may be. By her mirror, gowned in white as if for dreams, she watches life flowing past her, and she knows of no use to make of it.

INGRES.

RAPHAEL was a great designer, but there are a purity and a passion in Ingres' line for the like of which we have to go back to the Greeks. Apelles could not have realised more exquisite simplifications, could not have dreamed into any of his lost works a purer soul of beauty than Ingres did into the head, arms, and torso of "La Source." The line that floats about the muscles of an arm is illusive, evanescent, as an evening-tinted sky; and none except the Greeks and Ingres have attained such mystery of line: not Raphael, not even Michael Angelo in the romantic anatomies of his stupendous creations. Ingres was a Frenchman animated by the soul of an ancient Greek, an ancient Greek who lost himself in Japan. There is as much mystery in Ingres' line as in Rembrandt's light and shade. The arms and wrists and hands of the lady seated among the blue cushions in the Louvre are as illusive as any one of Mr. Whistler's "Nocturnes." The beautiful "Andromeda," head and throat leaned back almost out of nature, wild eyes and mass of heavy hair, long white arms uplifted, chained to the basalt,—how rare the simplifications, those arms, that body, the straight flanks and slender leg advancing,—are made of lines simple and beautiful as those which in the Venus of Milo realise the architectural beauty of woman. We shrink from such comparison, for perforce we see that the grandeur of the Venus is not in the Andromeda: but in both is the same quality

of beauty. In the drawing for the odalisque, in her long back, wonderful as a stem of woodbine, there is the very same love of form which a Greek expressed with the benign ease of a god speaking his creation through the harmonious universe.

But the pure, unconscious love of form, inherited from the Greeks, sometimes turned to passion in Ingres: not in "La Source," she is wholly Greek; but in the beautiful sinuous back of the odalisque we perceive some of the exasperation of nerves which betrays our century. If Phidias' sketches had come down to us, the margin filled with his hesitations, we should know more of his intimate personality. You notice, my dear reader, how intolerant I am of criticism of my idol, how I repudiate any slight suggestion of imperfection, how I turn upon myself and defend my god. Before going to bed, I often stand, candle in hand, before the Roman lady and enumerate the adorable perfections of the drawing. I am aware of my weakness, I have pleaded guilty to an idolatrous worship, but, if I have expressed myself as I intended, my great love will seem neither vain nor unreasonable. For surely for quality of beautiful line this man stands nearer to the Greeks than any other.

SOME JAPANESE PRINTS.

"LADIES UNDER TREES." Not Japanese ladies walking under Japanese trees—that is to say, trees peculiar to Japan, planted and fashioned according to the mode of Japan—but merely ladies walking under trees. True that the costumes are Japanese, the writing on the wall is in Japanese characters, the umbrellas and the idol on the tray are Japanese; universality is not attained by the simple device of dressing the model in a sheet and eliminating all accessories that might betray time and country; the great artist accepts the costume of his time and all the special signs of his time, and merely by the lovely exercise of genius the mere accidents of a generation become the symbolic expression of universal sensation and lasting truths. Do not ask me how this transformation is effected; it is the secret of every great artist, a secret which he exercises unconsciously, and which no critic has explained.

Looking at this yard of coloured print, I ask myself how it is that ever since art began no such admirable result has been obtained with means so slight. A few outlines drawn with pen and ink or pencil, and the interspaces filled in with two flat tints—a dark green, and a grey verging on mauve.

The drawing of the figures is marvellously beautiful. But why is it beautiful? Is it because of the individual character represented in the faces? The faces are expressed by means of a formula, and are as like one another as a row of eggs. Are the proportions of the figure correctly measured, and are the anatomies well understood? The figures are in the usual proportions so far as the number of heads is concerned: they are all from six and a half to seven heads high; but no motion of limbs happens under the draperies, and the hands and feet, like the faces, are expressed by a set of arbitrary conventions. It is not even easy to determine whether the posture of the woman on the right is intended for sitting or kneeling. She holds a tray, on which is an idol, and to provide sufficient balance for the composition the artist has placed a yellow umbrella in the idol's hand. Examine this design from end to end, and nowhere will you find any desire to imitate nature. With a line Utamaro expresses all that he deems it necessary to express of a face's contour. Three or four conventional markings stand for eyes, mouth, and ears; no desire to convey the illusion of a rounded surface disturbed his mind for a moment; the intention of the Japanese artists was merely to decorate a surface with line and colour. It was no part of their scheme to compete with nature, so it could not occur to them to cover one side of a face with shadow. The Japanese artists never thought to deceive; the art of deception they left to their conjurers. The Japanese artist thought of harmony, not of accuracy of line, and of harmony, not of truth of colour; it

was therefore impossible for him to entertain the idea of shading his drawings, and had some one whispered the idea to him he would have answered: "The frame will always tell people that they are not looking at nature. You would have it all heavy and black, but I want something light, and bright, and full of beauty. See these lines, are they not in themselves beautiful? are they not sharp, clear, and flowing, according to the necessity of the composition? Are not the grey and the dark green sufficiently contrasted? do they not bring to your eyes a sense of repose and unity? Look at the embroideries on the dresses, are they not delicate? do not the star-flowers come in the right place? is not the yellow in harmony with the grey and the green? And the blossoms on the trees, are they not touched in with the lightness of hand and delicacy of tone that you desire? Step back and see if the spots of colour and the effects of line become confused, or if they still hold their places from a distance as well as close. . . ."

Ladies under trees, by Utamaro! That grey-green design alternated with pale yellow corresponds more nearly to a sonata by Mozart than to anything else; both are fine decorations, musical and pictorial decorations, expressing nothing more definite than that sense of beauty which haunts the world. The fields give flowers, and the hands of man works of art.

Then this art is wholly irresponsible—it grows, obeying no rules, even as the flowers?

In obedience to the laws of some irregular metre so delicate and subtle that its structure escapes our

analysis, the flowers bloom in faultless, flawless, and ever-varying variety. We can only say these are beautiful because they are beautiful. . . .

That is begging the question.

He who attempts to go to the root of things always finds himself begging the question in the end. . . .

But you have to admit that a drawing that does not correspond to the object which the artist has set himself to copy cannot be well drawn.

That idea is the blight that has fallen on European art. The goodness or the badness of a drawing exists independently of the thing copied. We say—speaking of a branch, of a cloud, of a rock, of a flower, of a leaf—how beautifully drawn! Some clouds and some leaves are better drawn than others, not on account of complexity or simplicity of form, but because they interpret an innate sense of harmony inherent in us. And this natural drawing, which exists sometimes irrespective of anatomies and proportions, is always Utamaro's.

I do not know how long I stood examining this beautiful drawing, studying the grey and the green tint, admiring the yellow flowers on the dresses, wondering at the genius that placed the yellow umbrella in the idol's hand, the black masses of hair above the faces, so charmingly decorated with great yellow hair-pins. I watched the beauty of the trees, and was moved by the placing of the trees in the composition, and I delighted in the delicate blossoms. I was enchanted by all this bright and gracious paganism which Western civilisation has already defaced, and in a few years will have wholly destroyed.

I might describe more prints, and the pleasure they have given me; I might pile epithet upon epithet; I might say that the colour was as deep and as delicate as flower-bloom, and every outline spontaneous, and exquisite to the point of reminding me of the hopbine and ferns. It would be well to say these things; the praise would be appropriate to the occasion; but rather am I minded to call the reader's attention to what seems to me to be an essential difference between the East and the West.

Michael Angelo and Velasquez, however huge their strength in portraiture and decoration, however sublime Veronese and Tintoretto in magnificent display of colour, we must perforce admit to Oriental art a refinement of thought and a delicacy of handicraft—the outcome of the original thought—which never was attained by Italy, and which so transcends our grosser sense that it must for ever remain only half perceived and understood by us.

THE NEW ART CRITICISM.

BEFORE commenting on the very thoughtless utterances of two distinguished men, I think I must—even at the risk of appearing to attach over-much importance to my criticisms—reprint what I said about *L'Absinthe;* for in truth it was I who first meddled with the moral tap, and am responsible for the overflow:—

'Look at the head of the old Bohemian—the 'engraver Deboutin—a man whom I have known all 'my life, and yet he never really existed for me until 'I saw this picture. There is the hat I have always 'known, on the back of his head as I have always seen 'it, and the wooden pipe is held tight in his teeth as I 'have always seen him hold it. How large, how pro-'found, how simple the drawing! How easily and 'how naturally he lives in the pose, the body bent 'forward, the elbows on the table! Fine as the 'Orchardson undoubtedly is, it seems fatigued and 'explanatory by the side of this wonderful rendering 'of life; thin and restless—like Dumas fils' dialogue 'when we compare it with Ibsen's. The woman that 'sits beside the artist was at the Elysée Montmartre 'until two in the morning, then she went to the '*ratmort* and had a *soupe aux choux;* she lives in the 'Rue Fontaine, or perhaps the Rue Breda; she did

'not get up till half-past eleven; then she tied a few 'soiled petticoats round her, slipped on that peignoir, 'thrust her feet into those loose morning shoes, 'and came down to the café to have an absinthe 'before breakfast. Heavens! what a slut! A life of 'idleness and low vice is upon her face; we read there 'her whole life. *The tale is not a pleasant one, but it 'is a lesson.* Hogarth's view was larger, wider, but 'not so incisive, so deep, or so intense. Then how 'loose and general Hogarth's composition would seem 'compared to this marvellous epitome, this essence of 'things! That open space in front of the table, into 'which the skirt and the lean legs of the man come so 'well—how well the point of view was selected! The 'beautiful, dissonant rhythm of that composition is 'like a page of Wagner—the figures crushed into the 'right of the canvas, the left filled up with a fragment 'of marble table running in sharp perspective into 'the foreground. The newspaper lies as it would lie 'across the space between the tables. The colour, 'almost a monochrome, is very beautiful, a deep, rich 'harmony. More marvellous work the world never 'saw, and will never see again: a maze of assimilated 'influences, strangely assimilated, and eluding definition '—remembrances of Watteau and the Dutch painters, 'a good deal of Ingres' spirit, and, in the vigour of the 'arabesque, we may perhaps trace the influence of 'Poussin. But these influences float evanescent on 'the canvas, and the reading is difficult and contra-'dictory.'

I have written many a negligent phrase, many a stupid phrase, but the italicised phrase is the first

hypocritical phrase I ever wrote. I plead guilty to the grave offence of having suggested that a work of art is more than a work of art. The picture is only a work of art, and therefore void of all ethical signification. In writing the abominable phrase "*but it is a lesson*," I admitted as a truth the ridiculous contention that a work of art may influence a man's moral conduct; I admitted as a truth the grotesque contention that to read *Mdlle. de Maupin* may cause a man to desert his wife, whereas to read *Paradise Lost* may induce him to return to her. In the abominable phrase which I plead guilty to having written, I admitted the monstrous contention that our virtues and our vices originate not in our inherited natures, but are found in the books we read and the pictures we look upon. That art should be pure is quite another matter, and the necessity of purity in art can be maintained for other than ethical reasons. Art—I am speaking now of literature—owes a great deal to ethics, but ethics owes nothing to art. Without morality the art of the novelist and the dramatist would cease. So we are more deeply interested in the preservation of public morality than any other class—the clergy, of course, excepted. To accuse us of indifference in this matter is absurd. We must do our best to keep up a high standard of public morality; our living depends upon it—and it would be difficult to suggest a more powerful reason for our advocacy. Nevertheless, by a curious irony of fate we must preserve—at least, in our books—a distinctly impartial attitude on the very subject which most nearly concerns our pockets.

To remove these serious disabilities should be our serious aim. It might be possible to enter into some arrangement with the bishops to allow us access to the pulpits. Mr. So-and-so's episcopal style—I refer not only to this gentleman's writings, but also to his style of figure, which, on account of the opportunities it offers for a display of calf, could not fail to win their lordships' admiration—marks him as the proper head and spokesman of the deputation; and his well-known sympathies for the pecuniary interests of authors would enable him to explain that not even their lordships' pockets were so gravely concerned in the maintenance of public morality as our own.

I have allowed my pen to wander somewhat from the subject in hand; for before permitting myself to apologise for having hypocritically declared a great picture to be what it was not, and could not be—"a lesson"—it was clearly incumbent on me to show that the moral question was the backbone of the art which I practise myself, and that of all classes none are so necessarily moral as novelists. I think I have done this beyond possibility of disproof, or even of argument, and may therefore be allowed to lament my hypocrisy with as many tears and groans as I deem sufficient for the due expiation of my sin. Confession eases the heart. Listen. My description of Degas' picture seemed to me a little unconventional, and to soothe the reader who is shocked by everything that lies outside his habitual thought, and to dodge the reader who is always on the watch to introduce a discussion on that sterile subject,

"morality in art," to make things pleasant for everybody, to tickle the Philistine in his tenderest spot, I told a little lie: I suggested that some one had preached. I ought to have known human nature better—what one dog does another dog will do, and straight away preaching began—Zola and the drink question from Mr. Richmond, sociology from Mr. Crane.

But the picture is merely a work of art, and has nothing to do with drink or sociology; and its title is not *L'Absinthe*, nor even *Un Homme et une Femme assis dans un Café*, as Mr. Walter Sickert suggests, but simply *Au Café*. Mr. Walter Crane writes: "Here is a study of human degradation, male and female." Perhaps Mr. Walter Crane will feel inclined to apologise for his language when he learns that the man who sits tranquilly smoking his pipe is a portrait of the engraver Deboutin, a man of great talent and at least Mr. Walter Crane's equal as a writer and as a designer. True that M. Deboutin does not dress as well as Mr. Walter Crane, but there are many young men in Pall Mall who would consider Mr. Crane's velvet coat, red necktie, and soft felt hat quite intolerable, yet they would hardly be justified in speaking of a portrait of Mr. Walter Crane as a study of human degradation. Let me assure Mr. Walter Crane that when he speaks of M. Deboutin's life as being degraded, he is speaking on a subject of which he knows nothing. M. Deboutin has lived a very noble life, in no way inferior to Mr. Crane's; his life has been entirely devoted to art and literature; his etchings have been

for many years the admiration of artistic Paris, and he has had a play in verse performed at the Théâtre Français.

The picture represents M. Deboutin in the café of the *Nouvelle Athènes*. He has come down from his studio for breakfast, and he will return to his dry-points when he has finished his pipe. I have known M. Deboutin a great number of years, and a more sober man does not exist; and Mr. Crane's accusations of drunkenness might as well be made against Mr. Bernard Shaw. When, hypocritically, I said the picture was a lesson, I referred to the woman, who happens to be sitting next to M. Deboutin. Mr. Crane, Mr. Richmond, and others have jumped to the conclusion that M. Deboutin has come to the café with the woman, and that they are "boozing" together. Nothing can be farther from the truth. Deboutin always came to the café alone, as did Manet, Degas, Duranty. Deboutin is thinking of his dry-points; the woman is incapable of thought. If questioned about her life she would probably answer, "*Je suis à la coule.*" But there is no implication of drunkenness in the phrase. In England this class of woman is constantly drunk, in France hardly ever; and the woman Degas has painted is typical of her class, and she wears the habitual expression of her class. And the interest of the subject, from Degas' point of view, lies in this strange contrast—the man thinking of his dry-points, the woman thinking, as the phrase goes, of nothing at all. *Au Café*—that is the title of the picture. How simple, how significant! And how the picture gains in meaning when the web

of false melodrama that a couple of industrious spiders have woven about it is brushed aside!

I now turn to the more interesting, and what I think will prove the more instructive, part of my task —the analysis of the art criticism of Mr. Richmond and Mr. Crane.

Mr. Richmond says "it is not painting at all." We must understand therefore that the picture is void of all accomplishment—composition, drawing, and handling. We will take Mr. Richmond's objections in their order. The subject-matter out of which the artist extracted his composition was a man and woman seated in a café furnished with marble tables. The first difficulty the artist had to overcome was the symmetry of the lines of the tables. Not only are they exceedingly ugly from all ordinary points of view, but they cut the figures in two. The simplest way out of the difficulty would be to place one figure on one side of a table, the other on the other side, and this composition might be balanced by a waiter seen in the distance. That would be an ordinary arrangement of the subject. But the ingenuity with which Degas selects his point of view is without parallel in the whole history of art. And this picture is an excellent example. One line of tables runs up the picture from left to right, another line of tables, indicated by three parts of one table, strikes right across the foreground. The triangle thus formed is filled by the woman's dress, which is darker than the floor and lighter than the leather bench on which both figures are seated. Looking still more closely into the composition, we find that it is made of several perspectives

—the dark perspective of the bench, the light perspective of the partition behind, on which the light falls, and the rapid perspective of the marble table in the foreground. The man is high up on the right-hand corner, the woman is in the middle of the picture, and Degas has been careful to place her in front of the opening between the tables, for by so doing he was able to carry his half-tint right through the picture. The empty space on the left, so characteristic of Degas's compositions, admirably balances the composition, and it is only relieved by the stone matchbox, and the newspaper thrown across the opening between the tables. Everywhere a perspective, and these are combined with such strange art that the result is synthetic. A beautiful dissonant rhythm, always symphonic *coulant longours de source;* an exasperated vehemence and a continual desire of novelty penetrated and informed by a severely classical spirit —that is my reading of this composition.

'The qualities admired by this new school are 'certainly the mirrors of that side of the nineteenth-'century development most opposed to fine painting, 'or, say, fine craftsmanship. Hurry, rush, fashion, are 'the enemies of toil, patience, and seclusion, without 'which no great works are produced. Hence the 'admiration for an art fully answering to a demand. 'No doubt impressionism is an expression in painting 'of the deplorable side of modern life.'

After "forty years of the study of the best art of various schools that the galleries of Europe display," Mr. Richmond mistakes Degas for an impressionist (I use the word in its accepted sense); he follows the

lead of the ordinary art critic who includes Degas among the impressionists because Degas paints dancing lessons, and because he has once or twice exhibited with Monet and his followers. The best way—possibly the only way—to obtain any notion of the depth of the abyss on which we stand will be by a plain statement of the facts.

When Ingres fell down in the fit from which he never recovered, it was Degas who carried him out of his studio. Degas had then been working with Ingres only a few months, but that brief while convinced Ingres of his pupil's genius, and it is known that he believed that it would be Degas who would carry on the classical tradition of which he was a great exponent. Degas has done this, not as Flandren tried to, by reproducing the externality of the master's work, but as only a man of genius could, by the application of the method to new material. Degas's early pictures, "The Spartan Youths" and "Semiramis building the Walls of Babylon," are pure Ingres. To this day Degas might be very fairly described as *un petit Ingres*. Do we not find Ingres' penetrating and intense line in the thin straining limbs of Degas's ballet-girls, in the heavy shoulders of his laundresses bent over the ironing table, and in the coarse forms of his housewives who sponge themselves in tin baths? The vulgar, who see nothing of a work of art but its external side, will find it difficult to understand that the art of "La Source" and of Degas's cumbersome housewives is the same. To the vulgar, Bouguereau and not Degas is the interpreter of the classical tradition.

'Hurry, rush, fashion, are the enemies of toil, 'patience, and seclusion, without which no great 'works are produced.'

For the sake of his beloved drawing Degas has for many years locked himself into his studio from early morning till late at night, refusing to open even to his most intimate friends. Coming across him one morning in a small café, where he went at midday to eat a cutlet, I said, "My dear friend, I haven't seen you for years; when may I come?" The answer I received was: "You're an old friend, and if you'll make an appointment I'll see you. But I may as well tell you that for the last two years no one has been in my studio." On the whole it is perhaps as well that I declined to make an appointment, for another old friend who went, and who stayed a little longer than he was expected to stay, was thrown down the staircase. And that staircase is spiral, as steep as any ladder. Until he succeeded in realising his art Degas's tongue was the terror of artistic Paris; his solitary days, the strain on the nerves that the invention and composition of his art, so entirely new and original, entailed, wrecked his temper, and there were moments when his friends began to dread the end that his striving might bring about. But with the realisation of his artistic ideal his real nature returned, and he is now full of kind words for the feeble, and full of indulgence for the slightest artistic effort.

The story of these terrible years of striving is written plainly enough on every canvas signed by Degas; yet Mr. Richmond imagines him skipping about airily from café to café, dashing off little impressions. In another

letter Mr. Richmond says, 'Perfect craftsmanship, 'such as was Van Eyck's, Holbein's, Bellini's, Michael 'Angelo's, becomes more valuable as time goes on.' It is interesting to hear that Mr. Richmond admires Holbein's craftsmanship, but it will be still more interesting if he will explain how and why the head of the old Bohemian in the picture entitled "L'Absinthe" is inferior to Holbein. The art of Holbein, as I understand it—and if I do not understand it rightly I shall be delighted to have my mistake explained to me—consists of measurements and the power of observing and following an outline with remorseless precision. Now Degas in his early manner was frequently this. His portrait of his father listening to Pagan singing whilst he accompanied himself on the guitar is pure Holbein. Whether it is worse or better than Holbein is a matter of individual opinion; but to affect to admire Holbein and to decline to admire the portrait I speak of is—well, incomprehensible. The portrait of Deboutin in the picture entitled "L'Absinthe" is a later work, and is not quite so nearly in the manner of Holbein; but it is quite nearly enough to allow me to ask Mr. Richmond to explain how, and why it is inferior to Holbein. Inferior is not the word I want, for Mr. Richmond holds Holbein to be one of the greatest painters the world ever knew, and Degas to be hardly a painter at all.

For three weeks the pens of art critics, painters, designers, and engravers have been writing about this picture—about this rough Bohemian who leans over the café table with his wooden pipe fixed fast between his teeth, with his large soft felt hat on the

back of his head, upheld there by a shock of bushy hair, with his large battered face grown around with scanty, unkempt beard, illuminated by a fixed and concentrated eye which tells us that his thoughts are in pursuit of an idea—about one of the finest specimens of the art of this century—and what have they told us? Mr. Richmond mistakes the work for some hurried sketch—impressionism—and practically declares the painting to be worthless. Mr. Walter Crane says it is only fit for a sociological museum or for an illustrated tract in a temperance propaganda; he adds some remarks about "a new Adam and Eve and a paradise of unnatural selection" which escape my understanding. An engraver said that the picture was a vulgar subject vulgarly painted. Another set of men said the picture was wonderful, extraordinary, perfect, complete, excellent. But on neither side was any attempt made to explain why the picture was bad or why the picture was excellent. The picture is excellent, but why is it excellent? Because the scene is like a real scene passing before your eyes? Because nothing has been omitted that might have been included, because nothing has been included that might have been omitted? Because the painting is clear, smooth, and limpid and pleasant to the eye? Because the colour is harmonious, and though low in tone, rich and strong? Because each face is drawn in its distinctive lines, and each tells the tale of instincts and of race? Because the clothing is in its accustomed folds and is full of the individuality of the wearer? We look on this picture and we ask ourselves how it is that amongst the tens and hundreds of thousands of

men who have painted men and women in their daily occupations, habits, and surroundings, no one has said so much in so small a space, no one has expressed himself with that simplicity which draws all veils aside, and allows us to look into the heart of nature.

Where is the drawing visible except in the result? How beautifully concise it is, and yet it is large, supple, and true without excess of reality. Can you detect anywhere a measurement? Do you perceive a base, a fixed point from which the artist calculated and compared his drawing? That hat, full of the ill-usage of the studio, hanging on the shock of bushy hair, the perspective of those shoulders, and the round of the back, determining the exact width and thickness of the body, the movement of the arm leaning on the table, and the arm perfectly in the sleeve, and the ear and the shape of the neck hidden in the shadow of the hat and hair, and the battered face, sparely sown with an ill-kempt beard, illuminated by a fixed look which tells us that his thoughts are in pursuit of an idea—this old Bohemian smoking his pipe, does he not seem to have grown out of the canvas as naturally and mysteriously as a herb or plant? By the side of this drawing do not all the drawings in the gallery of English, French, Belgian, and Scandinavian seem either childish, ignorant-timed, or presumptuous? By the side of this picture do not all the other pictures in the gallery seem like little painted images?

Compared with this drawing, would not Holbein seem a little geometrical? Again I ask if you can detect in any outline or accent a fixed point from

whence the drawing was measured, calculated, and constructed. In the drawing of all the other painters you trace the method and you take note of the knowledge through which the model has been seen and which has, as it were, dictated to the eye what it should see. But in Degas the science of the drawing is hidden from us—a beautiful flexible drawing almost impersonal, bending to and following the character, as naturally as the banks follow the course of their river.

I stop, although I have not said everything. To complete my study of this picture we should have to examine that smooth, clean, supple painting of such delicate and yet such a compact tissue; we should have to study that simple expressive modelling; we should have to consider the resources of that palette, reduced almost to a monochrome and yet so full of colour. I stop, for I think I have said enough to rouse if not to fully awaken suspicion in Mr. Richmond and Mr. Crane of the profound science concealed in a picture about which I am afraid they have written somewhat thoughtlessly.

In the midst of a somewhat foolish and ignorant argument regarding the morality and the craftsmanship of a masterpiece, the right of the new art criticism to adversely criticise the work of Royal Academicians has been called into question. I cull the following from the columns of the *Westminster Gazette*:—

'Their words are practically the same; their praise 'and blame are similarly inspired; the means they 'employ to gain their object identical. So much we 'can see for ourselves. As for their object and their

'*bona-fides*, they concern me not. It is what they do, 'not what they are, that is the question here. What 'they do is to form a caucus in art criticism, and owing 'to their vehemence and the limitation of their aim, a 'caucus which is increasing in influence, and, to the 'best of my belief, doing cruel injustice to many great 'artists, and much injury to English art. It is for this 'reason, and this reason only, that I have taken up my 'parable on the subject. I have in vain endeavoured 'to induce those whose words would come with far 'greater authority than mine to do so. I went per-'sonally to the presidents of the two greatest artistic 'bodies in the kingdom to ask them to speak or write 'on the subject, but I found their view to be that 'such action would be misconstrued, and would in 'their position be unbecoming.'

The meaning of all this is that the ferret is in the hole and the rats have begun to squeak already. Soon they will come hopping out of St. John's Wood Avenue, so make ready your sticks and stones.

In April 1892 I wrote: 'The position of the 'Academy is as impregnable as Gibraltar. But Gib-'raltar itself was once captured by a small company 'of resolute men, and if ever there exist in London six 'resolute art critics, each capable of distinguishing 'between a bad picture and a good one, each deter-'mined at all costs to tell the truth, and if these six 'critics will keep in line, then, and not till then, some 'of the reforms so urgently needed, and so often 'demanded from the Academy, will be granted. I do 'not mean that these six critics will bring the Academi-'cians on their knees by writing fulminating articles on

'the Academy. Such attacks were as idle as whistling 'for rain on the house-tops. The Academicians laugh 'at such attacks, relying on the profound indifference 'of the public to artistic questions. But there is 'another kind of attack which the Academicians may 'not ignore, and that is true criticism. If six news-'papers were to tell the simple truth about the canvases 'which the Academicians will exhibit next month, the 'Academicians would soon cry out for quarter and 'grant all necessary reforms.'

I have only now to withdraw the word "reform." The Academy cannot reform, and must be destroyed. The Academy has tried to reform, and has failed. Thirty years ago the pre-Raphaelite movement nearly succeeded in bringing about an effectual shipwreck. But when Mr. Holman Hunt went to Italy, special terms were offered and accepted. The election of Millais and Watts saved the Academy, and instead of the Academy, it was the genius of one of England's greatest painters that was destroyed. "Ophelia," "Autumn Leaves," and "St. Agnes' Eve" are pictures that will hold their own in any gallery among pictures of every age and every country. But fathomless is the abyss which separates them from Sir John Millais' academic work.

The Academy is a distinctly commercial enterprise. Has not Sir John Millais said, in an interview, that the hanging committee at Burlington House selects the pictures that will draw the greatest number of shillings. The Academy has been subventioned by the State to the extent of three hundred thousand pounds, and that money has been employed

in arrogant commercialism. The Academy holds a hundred thousand pounds in trust, left by Mr. Chantry for the furtherance of art in this country; and this money is spent on the purchase of pictures by impecunious Academicians, and the collection formed with this money is one of the seven horrors of civilisation. The Academy has tolerated genius when it was popular, it has trampled upon genius when it was unpopular; and the business of the new art criticism is to rid art of the incubus. The Academy must be destroyed, and when that is accomplished the other Royal institutes will follow as a matter of course. The object of the new art criticism is to give free trade to art.

LONG AGO IN ITALY.

Come to the New Gallery. We shall pass out of sight of flat dreary London, drab-coloured streets full of overcoats, silk hats, dripping umbrellas, omnibuses. We shall pass out of sight of long perspectives of square houses lost in fine rain and grey mist. We shall enter an enchanted land, a land of angels and aureoles; of crimson and gold, and purple raiment; of beautiful youths crowned with flowers; of fabulous blue landscape and delicate architecture. Know ye the land? Botticelli is king there, king of clasped hands and almond-eyed Madonnas. It was he who conceived and designed that enigmatic Virgin's face; it was he who placed that long-fingered hand on the thigh of the Infant God; it was he who coiled that heavy hair about that triangle of neck and interwove it with pearls; it was he who drew the graceful lace over the head-dress, and painted it in such innumerable delicacy of fold that we wonder and are fain to believe that it is but the magic of an instant's hallucination. Know ye the land? Filippo Lippi is prince there, prince of angel youths, fair hair crowned with fair flowers; they stand round a tall throne with strings of coral and precious stones in their hands. It was Filippo Lippi who composed

that palette of grey soft pearly pink; it was he who placed that beautiful red in the right-hand corner, and carried it with such enchanting harmony through the yellow raiment of the angel youth, echoing it in a subdued key in the vesture which the Virgin wears under her blue garment, and by means of the red coral which decorates the tall throne he carried it round the picture; it was he, too, who filled those angel eyes with passion such as awakens in heaven at the touch of wings, at the sound of citherns and cintoles.

Know ye the land where Botticelli and Filippo Lippi dreamed immortal dreams? Know ye the land, Italy in the fifteenth century? Exquisite angel faces were their visions by day and night, and their thoughts were mystic landscapes and fantastic architecture; aureoles, roses, pearls, and rich embroideries were parcel of their habitual sense; and the decoration of a surface with beautiful colour was their souls' desire. Of truth of effect and local colour they knew nothing, and cared nothing. Beauty for beauty's sake was the first article of their faith. They measured a profile with relentless accuracy, and followed its outline unflinchingly, their intention was no more than to produce a likeness of the lady who sat posing for her portrait, but some miracle saved them from base naturalism. The humblest, equally with the noblest dreamer, was preserved from it; and that their eyes naturally saw more beautifully than ours seems to be the only explanation. Ugliness must have always existed; but Florentine eyes did not see ugliness. Or did their eyes see it, and did

they disdain it? Do they owe their art to a wise æstheticism, or to a fortunate limitation of sight? These are questions that none may answer, but which rise up in our mind and perplex us when we enter the New Gallery; for verily it would seem, from the dream pictures there, that a time once existed upon earth when the world was fair as a garden, and life was a happy aspiration. In the fifteenth century the world seems to have been made of gold, jewellery, pictures, embroidered stuffs, statues, and engraved weapons; in the fifteenth century the world seems to have been inhabited only by nobles and prelates; and the only buildings that seem to have existed were palaces and cathedrals. Then Art seemed for all men, and life only for architecture, painting, carving, and engraving long rapiers; and length of time for monks to illuminate great missals in the happy solitude of their cells, and for nuns to weave embroideries and to stitch jewelled vestments.

The Florentines loved their children as dearly as we do ours; but in their pictures there is but the Divine Child. They loved girls and gallantries as well as we do; but in their pictures there are but the Virgin and a few saints.

History tells us that wars, massacres, and persecutions were frequent in the fifteenth century; but in its art we learn no more of the political than we do of the domestic life of the century. The Virgin and Child were sufficient inspiration for hundreds of painters. Now she is in full-face, now in three-quarter face, now in profile. In this picture she

wears a blue cloak, in that picture she is clad in a grey. She is alone with the Child in a bower of tall roses, or she is seated on a high throne. Perhaps the painter has varied the composition by the introduction of St. John leaning forward with clasped hands; or maybe he has introduced a group of angels, as Filippo Lippi has done. The throne is sometimes high, sometimes low; but such slight alteration is enough for a new picture. And several generations of painters seem to have lived and died believing that their art was to all practical and artistic purposes limited to the continual variation of this theme.

Among these painters Botticelli was the incontestable master; but about him crowd hundreds of pictures, pictures rather than names. Imagine a number of workmen anxious to know how they should learn to paint well, to paint with brilliancy, with consistency, with ease, and with lasting colours. Imagine a collection of gold ornaments, jewels, and enamels, in which we can detect the skill of the goldsmith, of the painter of stained-glass, of the engraver, and of the illuminator of missals; the inspiration is grave and monastic, the destination a palace or a cathedral, the effect dazzling; and out of this miraculous handicraft Filippo Lippi is always distinct, soft as the dawn, mysterious as a flower, less vigorous but more illusive than Botticelli, and so strangely personal that while looking at him we are absorbed.

To differentiate between the crowd of workmen that surrounded Filippo Lippi and Botticelli were impossible. They painted beautiful things because

they lived in an age in which ugliness hardly existed, or was not as visible as it is now; they were content to merge their personalities in an artistic formula; none sought to invent a personality which did not exist in himself. Employing without question a method of drawing and of painting that was common to all of them, they worked in perfect sympathy, almost in collaboration. Plagiarism was then a virtue; they took from each other freely; and the result is a collective rather than individual inspirations. Now and then genius breaks through, as a storm breaks a spell of summer weather. "The Virgin and Child, with St. Clare and St. Agatha," lent by Mrs. Austin and the trustees of the late J. T. Austin, is one of the most beautiful pictures I have ever seen. The temperament of the painter, his special manner of feeling and seeing, is strangely, almost audaciously, affirmed in the mysterious sensuality of the angels' faces; the painter lays bare a rare and remote corner of his soul; something has been said that was never said before, and never has been said so well since. But if the expression given to these angels is distinctive, it is extraordinarily enhanced by the beauty of the colour. Indeed, the harmony of the colour-scheme is inseparable from the melodious expressiveness of the eyes. Look at the gesture of the hand on the right; is not the association of ideas strangely intimate, curious, and profound?

But come and let us look at a real Botticelli, a work which convinces at the first glance by the extraordinary expressiveness of the drawing, by the

originality of the design, by the miraculous handicraft; let us look at the "Virgin and Child and St. John," lent by Messrs. Colnaghi.

It is a panel some 36 by 25 inches, almost filled by a life-size three-quarter-length figure of the Virgin. She is seated on the right, and holds the Infant Saviour in her arms. In the foreground on the left there is a book and cushion, behind which St. John stands, his hands clasped, bearing a cross. Never was a head designed with more genius than that strange Virgin, ecstatic, mysterious, sphinx-like; with half-closed eyes, she bends her face to meet her God's kiss. In this picture Botticelli sought to realise the awfulness of the Christian mystery: the Mother leans to the kiss of her Son—her Son, who is likewise her God, and her brain is dim with its ecstasy. She is perturbed and overcome; the kiss is in her brain, and it trembles on her lips. You who have not seen the picture will think that this description is but the tale of the writer who reads his fancies into the panel before him. But the intention of the painter did not outstrip the power of expression which his fingers held. He expressed what I say he expressed, and more perfectly, more suggestively, than any words. And how? It will be imagined that it was by means of some illusive line that Botticelli rendered the very touch and breath of this extraordinary kiss; by that illusive line which Degas employs in his expressions of the fugitive and the evanescent. How great, therefore, is our surprise when we look into the picture to find that the mystery and ecstasy of this kiss are expressed by a hard, firm, dark line.

And the sensation of this strange ecstatic kiss pervades the entire composition; it is embodied in the hand placed so reverently on the thigh of the Infant God and in the eyes of St. John, who watches the divine mystery which is being accomplished. On St. John's face there is earthly reverence and awe; on Christ's face, though it is drawn in rigid outline, though it looks as if it were stamped out of iron, there is universal love, cloudlike and ineffable; and Christ's knees are drawn close, and the hand of the Virgin holds them close; and through the hand come bits of draperies exquisitely designed. Indeed, the distribution of line through the picture is as perfect as the distribution of colour; the form of the blue cloak is as perfect as the colour, and the green cape falls from the shoulder, satisfying both senses; the crimson vesture which she wears underneath her cloak is extraordinarily pure, and balances the crimson cloak which St. John wears. But these beauties are subordinate to the beauty of the Virgin's head. How grand it is in style! How strange and enigmatic! And in the design of that head Botticelli has displayed all his skill. The fair hair is covered with delicate gauze edged with lace, and overcoming the difficulties of that most rebellious of all mediums—tempera!—his brush worked over the surface, fulfilling his slightest thought, realising all the transparency of gauze, the intricacy of lace, the brightness of crimson silk, the very gravity of the embossed binding of the book, the sway and texture of every drapery, the gold of the tall cross, and the darker gold of the aureole high up in the picture, set against a strip of Florentine sky.

ND
190
M8
1906

UC SOUTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
A 000 646 830 0

THE LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Santa Barbara

THIS BOOK IS DUE ON THE LAST DATE
STAMPED BELOW.

CIRC. AFTER DEC 1 [illegible]

Series 9482